

Family Student Engagement

Empowering Equitable Family Partnerships - Lifting All Voices

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Part I:

Family Engagement Overview

What is Family Engagement ?



“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.”

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education’s policy statement on family engagement



What is Family Partnership ?

"the intentional practice of working with families for the ultimate goal of positive outcomes in all areas through the life course."

- Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant



Shared beliefs of Family Engagement

- ❖ Values family leadership at all levels: from an individual to community to policy.¹
- ❖ Involves connecting with families, interacting with them as equal partners, and establishing with them strong two-way communication channels.¹
- ❖ Is equitable and promotes a practice of cultural and linguistic competence.¹
 - **Equity**, is the elimination of privilege, oppression, disparities, and disadvantage



Family engagement that connects families, children, and schools at all levels is;

→ *systemic*


incorporating engagement strategies into all systems and services

→ *intentional*


incorporating purposeful and deliberate engagement strategies

→ *two-way*

Effective family engagement involves connecting with families, interacting with them as equal partners, and establishing with them strong two-way communications channels.



Culture of Effective Family Engagement


- ★ ***“Meaningful and long-term family engagement can be established only when organizations create a systemic culture of engagement and collaboration.”¹***
 - Requires ALL staff irrespective of their roles, to embrace the importance of engaging with families
 - Respectful of families
 - Grows and evolves with the needs of children, parents/caregivers, families, and educators
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Culture of Effective Family Engagement

- Has a primary and ongoing focus on engagement rather than a series of isolated efforts
- Family engagement is equitable and embraces diversity
 - ❖ **Diversity** includes, but is not limited to, different racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious backgrounds, gender identities, sexual orientations, family structures, and abilities, or special needs¹



Equitable Family Engagement

- **adopts** a strengths based approach that is culturally and linguistically responsive
 - **recognizes** the strengths of families
 - **acknowledges, respects, and learns** from individual and group differences
 - **considers** family preferences while adapting practices
 - **shares** decision-making with family members
 - **approaches** families as equal and reciprocal partners
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Family Role in Engagement

- ❑ “A whole-family approach tends to the needs of and tracks outcomes for both children/youth and adults simultaneously”¹
- ❑ It does not arrange services and opportunities for the children and the adults in their lives into separate silos.



Community Partnerships

The process of family engagement emphasizes building strong, positive, and effective relationships with families while establishing connections with communities.¹



“A **community** is typically defined through the lens of a neighborhood, town, city or some other geographic space.”¹

Family engagement suggests a broader definition of community.



Defining Community for Family Engagement

Community incorporates “a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of common attitudes, interests, goals, and/or living space, which leads to collaboration through sharing of ideas, information and other resources”¹

Community is “mutually respectful, strengths-based interactions between practitioners, families, community members, and organizations.”¹

To understand how to build partnerships within a community to support families, schools must first turn to families to understand how they define community¹



Benefits of Community

- ★ Helps recognize common goals, align resources, and share data for continuous improvement and effective partnerships
- ★ Supports family members' roles as valued community members
- ★ Provides tangible supports and resources that families, educators and schools want and need.



Research indicates that:

Family engagement is crucial for healthy growth of children and youth in all domains of health and development.

The positive effects of family engagement last all the way through the K–12 years and beyond

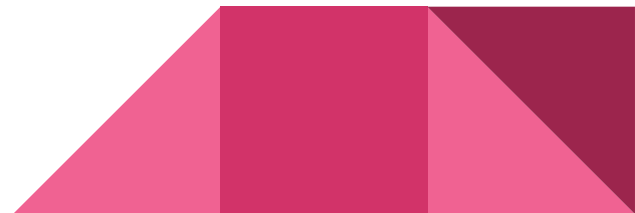
(e.g. El Nokali, Bachman, & VotrubaDrzal, 2010; Froiland, Peterson, & Davison, 2013; Jeynes, 2016).

Family engagement improves child-teacher relationships (Dearing, Kreider, & Weiss, 2008) and helps smooth child and family transitions to kindergarten

(Smythe-Leistico et al., 2012).

Quality family engagement can have a lasting effect on a child's social-emotional and physical health, school readiness, academic achievement, and later success in life

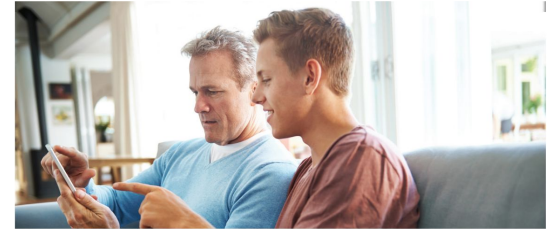
(e.g. Smith, Robbins, Stagman, & Mahur, 2013; Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, & Lloyd, 2013; Henderson, & Mapp, 2003)



Family support plays a pivotal role in supporting the development of youth with disabilities during their transition years (Peterson, 2004)



Family engagement is associated with positive outcomes at higher grades, such as higher graduation rates (Michaels & Ferrara 2005).



Families, who are active and respected participants in child learning and educational settings, can help practitioners see new ways to build safe, welcoming, and trusting environments (Reedy & McGrath, 2010; Powell, Son, File, & San Juan, 2010)

Family engagement is associated with reduction in the number of children entering the child welfare system (Marts, Lee, McRoy, & McCroskey, 2008).

Access to information about their children's learning and development affects parents' self-efficacy, confidence, and skills (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, & Sandler, 2005).

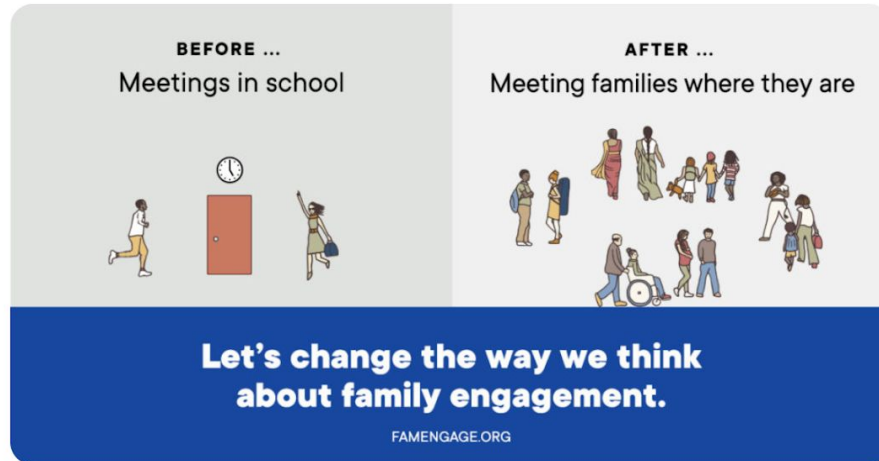


Part II:

Framing Engagement for Educators

Framing Family Engagement for Educators

When educators share mutual understandings of family engagement they can build their individual capacities for it in their teaching practices while contributing to the overall culture of engagement in their schools.



Understanding # 1

Family Engagement is an Interdependent Partnership

Just as a space launch relies on a team of people working together to plan and complete a mission, families, schools, and communities can work together to launch children's learning.

This involves planning successful learning by collaborating at the start of the school year. And when families, schools, and communities work together throughout the year on their shared mission, student learning takes off! ²



Understanding # 2

Family Engagement is Consistent Interaction

Example:

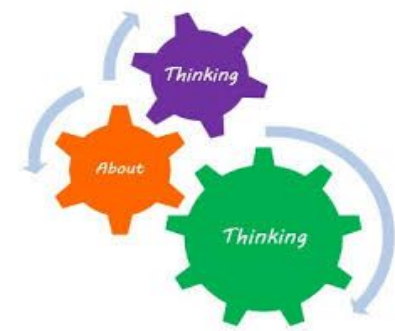
Back to school means it's also time to encourage our parents/caregivers to become involved by removing barriers to family engagement, for example, holding school events at different times of the day to allow for various work schedules.

What can you do to promote family engagement from the start of the school year and throughout the year?



Understanding # 3

Family Engagement is Metacognitive



How are you considering FE practices that illustrate the barriers families may face and how to solve them ?

- ❖ Engage families in your school community to help to ensure that every student has an opportunity to succeed in school and in life and acknowledge that it can be difficult for many families to become involved.
- ❖ Try working with local communities to hold a greater number of multi-language events outside of school
- ❖ Create opportunities for parents to get involved before, during, and after the school day, and provide transportation to and from school events.
- ❖ Provide examples of equitable practices
- ❖ Provide messages in different languages, depending on the communities you are trying to reach.



Family Engagement Benefits Everyone

- Making sure there are plenty of opportunities for families and schools to work together benefits everyone.
- When parents/caregivers know what is being taught in the classroom, they can reinforce those lessons at home. This helps children do better in school.
- Support from parents/caregivers also supports educators and improves the experience for everyone.

Family Engagement Lifts All Voices

When caregivers/parents describe their own experiences, it helps people understand that engagement is both important and feasible. Providing opportunities for all voices to be heard is imperative when effectively engaging with families.



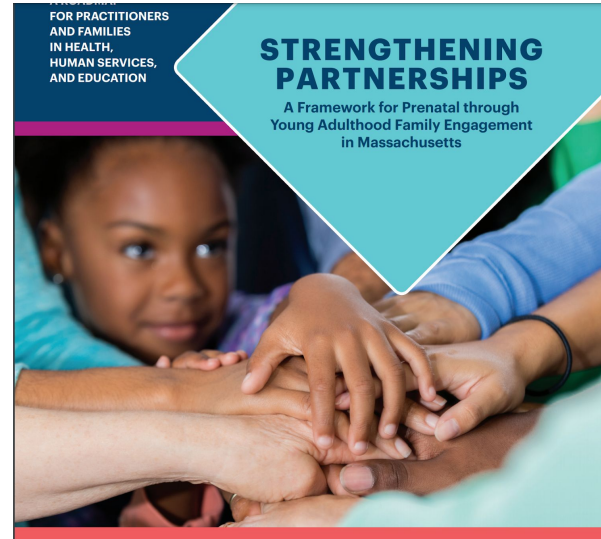
Part III:

Family Engagement Frameworks

The “Roadmap” to Family Engagement for Schools

Massachusetts created a [Roadmap to Family Engagement](#), which “builds on existing family engagement frameworks, integrates principles of equity and cultural responsiveness, and provides an aligned approach to engaging with families.”¹

- ***There are 5 guiding principles and 4 elements that form the basis and provide a foundation for the FE framework***



Guiding Principle # 1

*“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.”*¹

Fundamental practices include:


- Recognizing and respecting the uniqueness of each family
- Keeping families’ and youth voices and perspectives at the center
- Planning and implementing activities **with** families and youth and not **for** families and youth.



Guiding Principle # 2

“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.”¹


Fundamental practices include:

- Recognizing and respecting the individuality of each family including the strengths it possesses, needs it has, and barriers it faces
 - Acknowledging the diversity within and across families within an organization, health care setting, school and/or community
 - Approaching diversity from a strengths-based perspective.
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Guiding Principle # 3

“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.”¹


Fundamental practices include:

- Embracing the philosophy that building positive, goal-oriented relationships is a two way process between everyone involved
 - Recognizing and respecting diversity within and across families, striving to establish a positive relationship with all families
 - Acknowledging that for some families, due to prior experiences, trust may need to be rebuilt and dedicating the time needed to re-establish that trusting relationship
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Guiding Principle # 4

“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.”¹

Fundamental practices include:

- Recognizing families as the best champions of their child’s success in all domains of health and development
 - Honoring and drawing on families’ wealth of knowledge, experience, and expertise
 - Engaging families in all decisions made with regards to their child.
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Guiding Principle # 5

“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. Providing equity-based opportunities for family engagement can help family members become effective advocates for their children.”¹

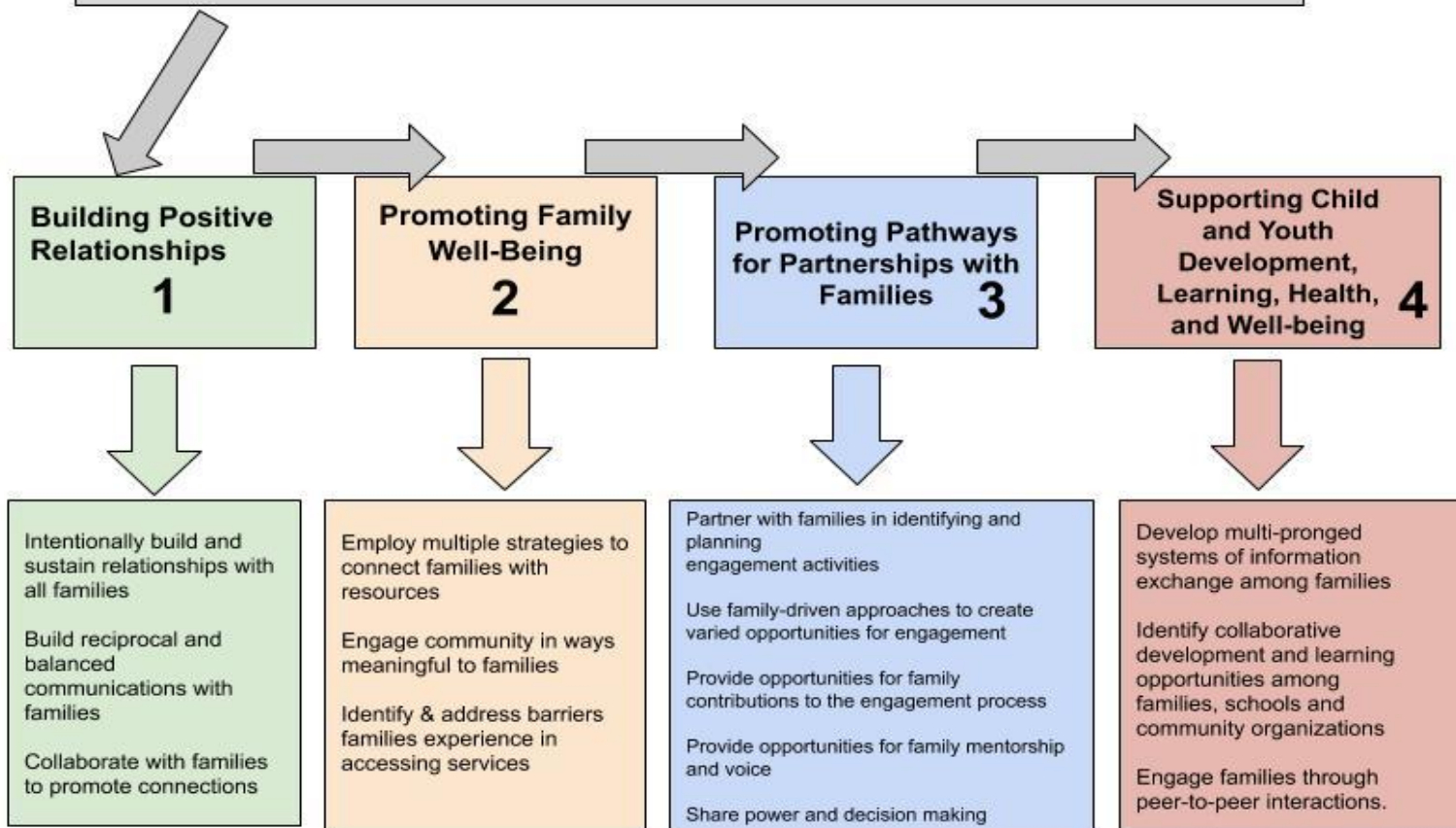
Fundamental practices include:

- Reflecting on and addressing inequities as well as implicit and explicit bias within individuals and organizations, policies and systems when engaging with families
- Integrating cultural and linguistic responsive practices, including but not limited to translation, interpretation and partnership with cultural brokers
- Valuing opportunities to engage with all families to learn more about them, their experiences, culture, and goals
- Recognizing the need to build and rebuild trust with families who experience inequities and bias.



Four Elements of the Family Engagement Framework

Each element builds on the previous element and has a set of specific goals that the element translates to



Part III:

Family Engagement Indicators

Fundamentals Tool for Family Engagement


Northampton Public Schools will be using the [Family Engagement Framework](#) and [Massachusetts Family, School, and Community Partnership Fundamentals Tool](#) to support, assess and enhance their work with families.



*The **NPS Family Engagement Tool** assesses where the district and schools are in their progress of implementing effective family engagement.*



NPS Resources

- [NPS Family Student Engagement Webpage](#)
 - [NPS English Learner Education Webpage](#)
 - [Road Map to Family Engagement](#)
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References

1. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/family-engagement-framework.pdf>
2. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/?section=family>
3. <https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/news-item/reframing-family-school-and-community-engagement/>

