

Parent/Family Engagement

Why Parent/Family Engagement?

“Family engagement is a shared responsibility in which schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to reaching out to engage families in meaningful ways and in which families are committed to actively supporting their children’s learning and development.”

-Harvard Family Research Project

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) acknowledges the critical role parents and other stakeholders play in student success and school improvement efforts by requiring that they be involved in the development of new education plans and implementation of the law. But parent and family engagement must go beyond development of a state plan and be embedded into the everyday fiber of our schools. Including measures of parent/family engagement in the school quality/student success indicator would be an important step in bringing this important tool to all Minnesota schools, students and families.

Parent/Family Engagement Correlates with Positive Student Outcomes

A 2002 research review by the National Center for Family and Community Connections With School concluded that there is a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and student success, regardless of race/ethnicity, class, or parents’ level of education. (1) Family engagement is associated with improved school readiness, higher student achievement, better social skills and behavior and increased likelihood of graduation (2).

To put it another way, when families are involved in their children’s learning both at home and at school, their children do better in school.

Parent/Family Engagement Definition

The 2002 report also pointed to specific types of involvement as being especially beneficial to children’s academic success:

- Involvement programs that link to learning improve student achievement.
- Speaking up for children protects and promotes their success.
- All families can contribute to their children’s success.
- Community organizing gets results.

The National PTA developed the [National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#) based on this framework. The Standards were developed with leading experts on parent involvement and school-community partnerships and reflect recent research and a focus on improving parent and community involvement practices.

PTA’s National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

- Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community—Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.
- Standard 2: Communicating effectively—Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

- Standard 3: Supporting student success—Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students’ learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.
- Standard 4: Speaking up for every child—Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.
- Standard 5: Sharing power—Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.
- Standard 6: Collaborating with community—Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

For each of the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships, PTA developed a detailed rubric that contains specific goals and indicators for measuring whether those goals are being met (3). The PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships Assessment Guide focuses on implementation at the local school level, but recognizes that many of the actions recommended will require district policies, resources, professional development, and support if they are to be achieved and sustained.

How Is Parent/Family Engagement Measured?

There is a large body of research on how to measure parent/family engagement in schools, and many school districts and communities are using specific measures of parent/family engagement to inform their school and district improvement plans and progress on strategic plans (4). Most of the measurements involve three components:

- Inventory of the parent/family engagement activities and materials being used
- Surveys of parent/family members
- Focus groups with parent/family members

The National PTA has developed “The Power of Partnerships Family Survey” (5) to help schools measure how well schools are supporting family-school partnerships. The questions on the survey are tied to each of the PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships.

Resource List

1. Henderson, A., and Mapp, K. [A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement](#), National Center for Family and Community Connections With School, 2002.
2. Dearing, E., McCartney, K., Weiss, H.B., Kreider, H., and Simpkins, S. [Family Involvement Makes a Difference series](#), Harvard Family Research Project, 2004.
3. [PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships Assessment Guide](#)
4. [Measuring Family and Community Engagement](#), REL Pacific, May 2015
5. [Power of Partnerships Family Survey](#), National PTA