

# Increasing and Improving Family Engagement

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## Four Levels of Family Engagement<sup>1</sup>

Partnership	Open-Door	Come-If-We-Call	Fortress
All families have something great to offer—we do whatever it takes to work closely together to make sure every single student succeeds.	Parents can be involved at our school in many ways. We're working hard to get an even bigger turnout for our activities and find more ways to engage families.	Parents are welcome when we ask them, but there's only so much they can offer. The most important thing they can do is help their kids at home.	Parents most important job is at home. If students don't do well, it's because their families don't give them enough support at home.

What is the current level of engagement with families? Are you satisfied?

List two positive statements that you want to communicate to families.

## New Initiative Implementation Plan

Select one idea and develop a plan of action for implementation.

Example: Speak with two families each day during dismissal.

1. Designate an area and good time to speak with families.
2. Identify which parents and which topics to discuss that day.
3. Track which parents you were able to speak with and keep notes for what you were able to discuss with them.

Initiative:		
Actions	Owner	Considerations
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

## Resources for Welcoming Families<sup>ii</sup>

***Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships***, by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies (New York: The New Press, 2007), examines, among other things, how to know whether your school is really open to partnerships (chapter 3) and how to develop trusting relationships (chapter 4). Chapter 4 ends with a checklist for determining how family-friendly your school is. For a free copy of the checklist and more information about the book, go to [www.thenewpress.com/bakesale](http://www.thenewpress.com/bakesale).

***Building Relationships for Student Success: School-Family-Community Partnerships and Student Achievement in the Northwest***, by Diane Dorfman and Amy Fisher (Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002), is a review of key research and of promising practices in schools with high poverty rates and large minority populations, including schools on Indian reservations. Go to [www.nwrel.org/partnerships/cloak/booklet2.pdf](http://www.nwrel.org/partnerships/cloak/booklet2.pdf).

The **Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)** provides resources for developing relationships, including *Ideas and Tools for Working with Parents and Families* at [www.case1.org/pub/packet.php](http://www.case1.org/pub/packet.php).

***Including Every Parent*** (2003), a guide developed by parents and teachers at the Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School in Boston and the Project for School Innovation, explores specific practices critical to engaging and empowering parents at school. Learn more at [www.psinnovation.org](http://www.psinnovation.org).

**National Fatherhood Initiative** offers programs, workshops, publications, and other materials to encourage men to be involved, responsible, and committed fathers. Go to [www.fatherhood.org](http://www.fatherhood.org).

**Tellin' Stories**, the parent organizing program of Teaching for Change, uses the power of story to connect people from diverse backgrounds. For more information, visit [www.teachingforchange.org/parentorg](http://www.teachingforchange.org/parentorg).

## Resources for Communicating Effectively<sup>iii</sup>

**Connecting Families and Schools: Sacramento ACT** (2005), a case study published by the Center for Community Change as part of An Action Guide for Education Organizing, tells the story of the Sacramento Area Congregations Together (ACT) home visiting program, which helps schools reach out to families. Go to [www.cccfiles.org/issues/education/actionguide/](http://www.cccfiles.org/issues/education/actionguide/).

**Culturally Responsive Parental Involvement: Concrete Understandings and Basic Strategies**, by A. Lin Goodwin and Sabrina Hope King (Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2002), offers concrete strategies for involving parents of diverse cultural backgrounds. Find it at [www.eric.ed.gov](http://www.eric.ed.gov).

The **Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE)** of the Harvard Family Research Project provides back issues of its electronic newsletters, many of which address issues of diversity, at [www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/](http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/).

The **National Network of Partnership Schools** at Johns Hopkins University publishes the Type 2 newsletter twice a year. Named for the second of six types of family involvement—communicating—it shares examples of best practices as well as solutions to challenges. Go to [www.csos.jhu.edu/P2000/publications.htm](http://www.csos.jhu.edu/P2000/publications.htm).

**Parents and Teachers Talking Together: A Handbook for Facilitators** (2003) outlines a discussion process developed by the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence in Kentucky. It includes a series of questions for parents and teachers to discuss, centered around the two main questions “What do we want for our students?” and “What do we need to do to get what we want?” Order the guide in the Center for Parent Leadership (CPL) Publications section at [www.prichardcommittee.org](http://www.prichardcommittee.org).

**Reaching Out to Diverse Populations: What Can Schools Do to Foster Family-School Connections?**, by Chris Ferguson (Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2005), recommends that schools build on cultural values, stress personal contact, foster communication, and offer accommodations such as child care, translation, and transportation. Read more at [www.sedl.org/connections/research-briefs.html](http://www.sedl.org/connections/research-briefs.html).

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<sup>i</sup> Adapted from Anne Henderson, Karen Mapp, Vivian Johnson, and Don Davies, *Beyond the Bake Sale* (2007)

<sup>ii</sup> National Standards for Family-School Partnership Implementation Guide. (April 2009). Retrieved from <http://www.pta.org/programs/content.cfm?ItemNumber=1804>

<sup>iii</sup> National Standards for Family-School Partnership Implementation Guide. (April 2009). Retrieved from <http://www.pta.org/programs/content.cfm?ItemNumber=1804>