

Family Engagement: Welcoming All Families in your School Community

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New York: Uniquely Diverse

- 2.6 million school children in 733 school districts
- 53% qualify for free or reduced price lunch
- 200,000 homeless children
- 18% special education
- 211 languages spoken
- 210,000 ELLs



WHY FAMILY ENGAGEMENT?

- Higher grades
- Better attendance
- School may be more enjoyable
- More likely to go on to postsecondary education or successful career
- You become a true community

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

In order to create school-family partnerships that raise student achievement, improve school and community, and increase public support, we need to understand the difference between family involvement and family engagement.



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

INVOLVEMENT

- To enfold or envelope – implies doing to
- Parent sending in supplies or volunteering at an event



ENGAGEMENT

- To come together and interlock – implies doing with
- Parent is serving on school decision making committee



NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS



<https://www.pta.org/home/run-your-pta/National-Standards-for-Family-School-Partnerships>

1: Welcome ALL Families

ALL Families are ACTIVE participants in the life of the school, feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

- Is the atmosphere family-friendly for everyone and free?
- For parents who work two jobs, or don't speak English? Are you translating?
- How are you supporting families with students differently-abled?
- Are you greeting parents at school activities and events?
- Are meetings in a variety of community locations?
- Do you have a parent/families help desk?
- Are you covering family engagement on Professional Development Days or Board Retreats?

It's one thing to say families are welcome and valued, but it's another thing to show it!



2: Effective Communication

Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

- ALL families should feel that the school keeps them informed
- Does your school have different ways to communicate? Do you use translation apps?
- Does the school or PTA survey families at least once a year?
- Are the principal and others easily accessible, what hours?
- How often do teachers communicate with families?
- PTA and school together should establish guidelines for regular communication between home and school.



3: Supporting Student Success

Families and staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development at home and school.

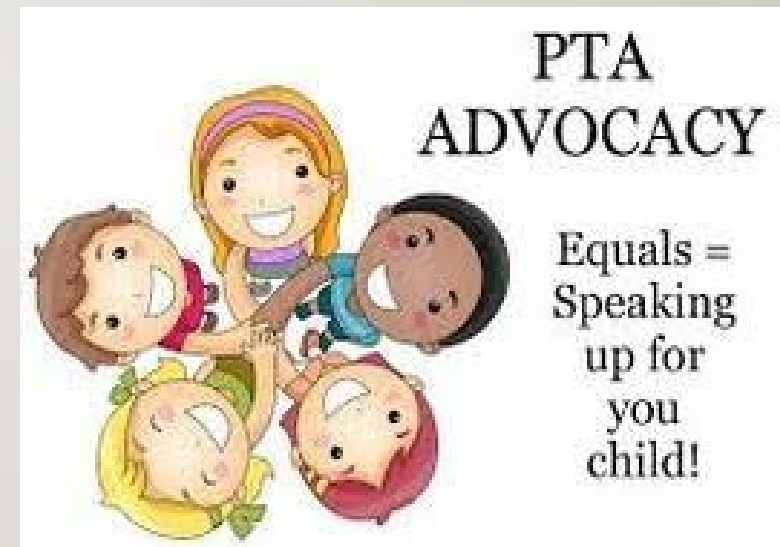
- Do parents and teachers communicate about student progress?
- Does the school use assessment results to inform parents?
- Are families invited to observe their children's classrooms? After-school opportunities?
- Do parents/families and teachers communicate about student progress?
- Do parents/families learn what good work looks like for their child's age and grade?
- Student-led parent-teacher conferences.
- Provide parent/family involvement tips and suggestions.
- Does the school offer opportunities for parents/caregivers to collaborate together?



4: Speaking Up for EVERY Child

Families are empowered to advocate for their own and other children, to ensure that ALL are treated fairly and have access to opportunities for success.

- Do parents/families know the rights of students/parents?
- How often do counselors and advisers meet with each student/parent?
- Publicize successful changes in the school that resulted from parent/family involvement.
- Facilitate parent/family participation in school committees.



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.

- Do families have a vote when decisions are made that affect kids?
- What exists to discuss issues of equity?
- Does your PTA represents ALL families in both membership and its leadership, and is a diverse population?
- Do you conduct an annual survey of families?
- School meeting where officials describe programs, services, and performance data?
- Do you have a suggestion box in the front office?
- Have a parent on ALL decision making and advisory committees?



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.

- Work with neighborhood associations, government, businesses, and universities to strengthen the school.
- Collaborate with community leaders.
- Give Back Day.
- Invite local businesses to offer info.
- Host a community breakfast.
- Host a community resource fair.
- Reach out to senior/retired citizens.
- Multicultural Fair/Event.



Now what?



6 Step Action Plan

Step 1 - Assess current practices for engaging families in improving school climate and student success.

Step 2 - Begin planning based on the assessment, survey findings, and discussions with stakeholders.

Step 3 - Present the action plan to the school community for feedback and buy-in.

Step 4 - Put the plan into action and monitor your progress throughout the school year.

Step 5 - At the end of the school year, document your successes and share widely.

Step 6 - As you plan for the next school year, explore how you can build on your accomplishments.



NYS PTA Can Help

- PTAs have access to MemberHub, a free parent/family engagement software.
- [NYS PTA Family Engagement Toolkit](#)
- [Family-School Partnerships](#)
- [National Standards for Family School Partnerships](#)



Don't Forget Your "Why"

