Connect Communities

Create strong connections among families, schools, tribal nations, and the greater community that are compassionate, culturally sensitive, and designed to meet the needs of the whole child in support of lifelong learning. Meaningful connections reflect diversity within the community. Follow the continuous improvement journey to begin your work.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY

Family engagement is not a program, activity, or event. The Oklahoma Family Engagement Framework establishes it as a shared responsibility among families, schools, and communities to build relationships that support a child's learning and growth from birth through college and career. With this pathway identified as a priority through your planning process, your next step will be to guide your team through the Do and Review steps.

DO

☐ How will you encourage local nonprofits and organizations to help all students and families, especially those that may be vulnerable, to meet their basic needs (e.g., food, clothing, housing, child supervision, medical services, and other resources)?

☐ How can you build a stronger sense of community among students and families within your district, schools, and classrooms?

☐ How will you identify local resources that can be used to support students who need extra learning support outside the school day (e.g., summer learning, afterschool programming, childcare)?

☐ How will you work with tribal and community partners to make sure families have access to essential resources (e.g., technology, internet access, educational supplies)?

☐ What resources and tools will your team need to be successful to connect communities?

REVIEW

☐ What happened when you implemented your plan?

☐ Is there evidence or data to show improvement or impact?

☐ What should you start, stop, or continue to do?

☐ What are your next steps? Who needs to be engaged?

☐ What resources do you need to ensure success?

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Know the Facts

Setting Goals Together

10% Oklahoma school leaders who **strongly agree** that families and other community members are actively involved in setting goals and strategies for educational improvement in the district.

Pathway in Action

In *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*, specific stories about "Collaborating With the Community" show ways to connect with the community from pen pal and mentoring programs to field trips at nature centers. Each story focuses on both sides of the story - the benefit to the families and students **and** the benefit to the community partner. An annual collection of good ideas is published as "Promising Partnership Practices" at www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories. These stories can give you ideas on ways to build your own partnership stories. "Characteristics of successful partnership programs are based on incremental progress. Including more family and community partnerships each year in ways that benefit more students takes time to develop. Schools and districts have shown that some progress can be made immediately, but it tends to take at least three years to demonstrate that a partnership program is a "permanent" component of school and district organization" (Epstein et al., 2009).

Resources

The authors of these books are leaders in the field of family, school, and community partnerships. They provide real-world examples, tools, and resources.

- *Powerful Partnerships: A Teacher's Guide to Engaging Families for Student Success* (Mapp et al., 2017)

- *Engage Every Family: Five Simple Principles*, Second Edition (Constantino, 2021)

- *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action,* Third Edition (Epstein et al., 2009)

- *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships* (Henderson et al., 2007)

Based on existing research and best practices, the *Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships* Version 2 (www.dualcapacity.org) is designed to support the development of family engagement strategies, policies, and programs (Mapp, K.L. & Bergman, E., 2019).

Going Forward

- Set a regular time for your team to work together.
- Introduce your team to resources specific to this pathway.
- Explore the pathway and what it looks like in your organization.

https://sde.ok.gov/fce

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