

Strengthen Relationships

Establish more effective personalized, two-way communication between schools and families that builds mutual trust and respect, reflects families' preferences, and provides families an authentic sense of engagement in their children's learning. Relationships should be individualized and inclusive of all families. Follow the continuous improvement journey to begin your work.

PLAN

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 many different types of communication (e.g., email, newsletters, home visits, text) do you use in your organization to engage with families? What types of communication are most accessible and best engage families (which may include parents, grandparents, extended family members, caregivers, or other responsible individuals)? Have you surveyed families to ask methods of communication that work best for them?
- How does each type of communication support and influence students' academic progress?
- Consider your current two-way communication practices. Are they characterized by mutual respect, careful listening, and timely school responses to family questions, ideas, suggestions, and concerns? What practices and tools should you put in place to create authentic, two-way communication to listen to families' hopes and concerns for their children's learning and their feedback on experiences?
- Are there ample opportunities for teachers and school leaders to "receive" communication as much as they "give" communication?
- How will you focus on physical and emotional well-being of families? How will you support families in meeting critical basic needs to ensure their children can effectively engage in learning?
- How will you include key tribal contacts such as a tribal education director or tribal social services director? Do you know how to find these contacts?
- What resources and tools will your team need to be successful in strengthening relationships with families?

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?

Know the Facts

Communication with Families



of families find text messages and phone calls most effective

TEXTS



CALLS



percent of the time schools use these methods of outreach

LEARNING HEROES: Parents 2020

Pathway in Action

In *Powerful Partnerships*, the authors identify “The First Contact: Welcome Phone Calls” as a foundational strategy to strengthen relationships. By reaching out to your families at the beginning of the year to listen to the hopes and dreams they have for their children, you establish a welcoming tone that encourages parents to engage with you. Perhaps you have missed that window and you are well into your school year. Now what? You can implement the “Good News Phone Call.” Families are accustomed to being contacted when their child is in trouble. Many schools make phone calls to families to share something good their child has done. *Powerful Partnerships* (Chapter 3) shares, “We hope that this phone call will be the start of many to come, and that you see it as the beginning of your relationship and partnership with families. This phone call is a chance to put your core beliefs into action!”

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.