

Family–Professional Partnership Checklist

This tool summarizes six core dimensions of effective family–professional partnerships. Each dimension includes 'Look-Fors' and 'Red Flags.' School leaders should use it as a reflection tool during professional development, IEP meetings, or staff coaching to ensure the development of trusting relationships between families and school personnel.

Dimension	Look-Fors (Positive Indicators)	Red Flags (Warning Signs)
Communication	• Frequent, clear, jargon-free • Honest and tactful • Two-way listening • Information proactively shared	• Hidden information • Overuse of jargon • Parents feel not listened to • Families 'stumble' onto resources
Commitment	• Work seen as more than a job • Accessible, flexible, consistent • Encouragement for family and child • Personal investment in outcomes	• Minimal effort – just 'checking boxes' • Treating child/family as a case, not people • Avoiding extra effort or support
Equality	• Parents empowered in decisions • Professionals validate family expertise • Collaboration without 'turfism' • Shared power at the table	• Professionals dominate decisions • Parent voices dismissed • 'Clout' or authority used against families • Team members territorial
Skills	• Competent and confident in roles • Adaptable to child's needs • High expectations for child's growth • Ongoing learning and openness	• Low or no expectations for child • Inflexibility in strategies • Unwillingness to learn • Ignoring whole child/family context
Trust	• Reliability – follow-through on promises • Child safety prioritized • Confidentiality maintained • Families feel secure	• Promises not kept • Safety concerns ignored • Breaches of confidentiality • Families fear mistreatment
Respect	• Valuing the child as a person • Courtesy and cultural sensitivity • Nonjudgmental interactions • Families treated with dignity	• Rudeness or dismissal of families • Judging family lifestyle or culture • Focusing only on disability label • Bureaucratic, impersonal treatment

Unified Leadership developed this tool based on this research: Blue-Banning, M., Summers, J. A., Frankland, H. C., Nelson, L. L., & Beegle, G. (2004). Dimensions of family and professional partnerships: Constructive guidelines for collaboration. *Exceptional Children*, 70(2), 167–184. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001440290407000203>

