



## **Systemic, Integrated, Responsive, and Sustainable Family Engagement Approaches: Getting Started**

Many districts, schools, parent centers and other educational organizations at various levels are interested in implementing systemic, integrated, responsive, and sustainable approaches to improve outcomes for students. These approaches, or organizational conditions, are often necessary to implement and sustain effective family engagement. These conditions make it easier for adults to change behavior, leverage resources, respond to needs, manage time, and sustain efforts.

**Systemic:** Family engagement is seen as a core component of educational goals. Infrastructure, policies and procedures that support the implementation of effective family engagement practices are in place.

**Integrated:** Family engagement is linked to teaching and learning and connects to all areas of education. Family engagement is part of the comprehensive planning and continuous improvement process.

**Responsive:** A multi-tiered system of support is used to respond to the unique needs of the diverse families in a specific community. Strategies are in place to meaningfully engage all families. Additional supports are available to families in need of specialized information, training, and assistance. This may include translation and interpreter services and many of the supports provided to parents of students with disabilities. And lastly intensive supports are provided to a small group of families in need of more individualized and ongoing support which sometimes involves linkages to outside resources or a third party facilitator or mediator.

**Sustainable:** Sustainability is often a bi-product of implementing systemic, integrated, and responsive family engagement strategies, with some strategies having greater impact. For example, when organizations are able to integrate family engagement practices into existing infrastructure, policies and procedures, those practices are more likely to sustain.



This document is designed to provide an introduction to systemic, integrated, responsive, and sustainable family engagement approaches. The strategies/activities included in this document are not intended to be prescriptive or an exhaustive list rather they are provided to inspire and fuel one's thinking about how organizational conditions can support and improve family engagement outcomes. Many family engagement resources exist that show not only the benefits of family engagement on student outcomes but what strategies are the most effective. These resources range from frameworks and rubrics to literature reviews and assessment tools. CADRE has included a list of some online resources at the end of this document.

### **Getting Started**

There are multiple ways to begin the process but many will find it necessary to first establish interest and eventually a commitment among key leaders to implement or improve systemic, integrated, responsive, and sustainable family engagement approaches. This often begins with several informal conversations, resource sharing, and potentially includes training and/or a facilitated discussion.

Once this commitment has been made, key stakeholders are identified and invited to participate in upcoming conversations and planning. Stakeholders often include decision-makers, key implementers, representatives from the target audience, and key partners. When stakeholders are engaged from the beginning, joint ownership and commitment to the implementation of the plan is more likely which is critical to sustainability. Stakeholder engagement happens along a continuum and thought should be given to the role of various stakeholders in the planning process. *Will an internal and/or external stakeholder group be formed? Will external stakeholders serve in an advisory role or will they be active members of the planning team and decision-makers?* Typically, the more stakeholders are empowered, the greater likelihood that they will develop a sense of ownership and commitment to the work.

### **Early Conversations to Narrow Focus**

Since time, energy and resources are limited, it is important to be strategic and select strategies/activities that will likely have a high impact on family engagement across the organization. Once again, there are multiple ways key stakeholders can narrow their focus, but a combination of factors (e.g., needs, interests, opportunities, level of effort) is often considered during this process. These activities can range from more informal approaches, such as parent cafes, to more formal assessments.



Below is a tool that may help facilitate discussions and organize group thinking to inform the decision-making process. Sustainability strategies are integrated throughout the tool.

<b>Family Engagement</b>				
<b>Systemic</b>	<b>Successes/Strengths</b>	<b>Area(s) to Grow</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Interest Level</b>
<b>Vision &amp; Commitment-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family engagement vision is jointly developed by families and educators</li> <li>• Family engagement is seen as a core component of educational goals</li> <li>• Home-school partnerships and collaborative problem-solving are promoted</li> </ul>				<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
<b>Leadership Support-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership is shared</li> <li>• Leaders act as change agents</li> <li>• Positive interactions are modeled</li> <li>• Sufficient resources are allocated</li> <li>• Staff have time to work towards improving home-school partnerships</li> </ul>				<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
<b>Data Systems-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff know the needs of the families in their community</li> <li>• Data are used to plan activities, monitor efforts &amp; evaluate effectiveness</li> <li>• Results are shared with stakeholders &amp; funders</li> <li>• Successes are celebrated</li> </ul>				<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low



<i>Systemic</i>	Successes/Strengths	Area(s) to Grow	Opportunities	Interest Level
<b>Dual Capacity Building</b> - both educators and parents are trained and supported to work with each other				<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
<b>Partnerships</b> with community organizations and parent leaders are leveraged to support family engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contributions of partners are acknowledged</li> </ul>				<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
<i>Integrated</i>	Successes/Strengths	Area(s) to Grow	Opportunities	Interest Level
<b>Linked to Learning</b> - family engagement is linked to teaching and learning. Family engagement is connected to all areas of education. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership</li> <li>Professional Development</li> <li>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</li> <li>Assessment</li> <li>Climate &amp; Culture</li> </ul>				<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
<b>Integrated with Established Infrastructure, Systems, and Processes</b> (e.g., the continuous district/school improvement team)				<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
<i>Responsive</i>	Successes/Strengths	Area(s) to Grow	Opportunities	Interest Level
<b>Reflective of Needs &amp; Interests</b> - efforts and supports should be informed by the unique needs and resources within the state, region, or community				<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low



<i>Responsive</i>	Successes/Strengths	Area(s) to Grow	Opportunities	Interest Level
<p><b>Support All Families-</b> engage and support all families, including parents of students with disabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Welcoming Environments-</b> caring, respectful, and responsive to the diverse needs of families</li> <li>• <b>Two-way Communication-</b> parents and educators engage in meaningful two-way conversations to               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Discuss expectations</li> <li>○ Share progress</li> <li>○ Listen to each other</li> <li>○ Resolve issues as they arise</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Decision-Making-</b> parents are included in the decision-making process</li> </ul>				<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
<p><b>Provide Targeted Supports-</b> family engagement efforts are more targeted and specialized (often supports are targeted to specific populations, such as parents of students with disabilities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May include peer to peer assistance and family support/networking groups</li> <li>• May include early conflict resolution strategies</li> </ul>				<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
<p><b>Provide Intensive Supports-</b> family engagement efforts are more intensive and ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May require linkages to other community organization(s)</li> <li>• May involve a third party mediator or facilitator</li> <li>• May include wrap-around supports</li> </ul>				<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low



## Online Family Engagement Resources

**CADRE website** ([www.directionservice.org/cadre](http://www.directionservice.org/cadre)) includes resources related to dispute resolution in special education. A number of resources promote positive home-school partnerships.

Family Engagement resources of particular interest may include:

- [A CADRE Webinar- Moving Forward: Building Effective Family-School Partnerships](#)
- [A CADRE Webinar- Playing Nicely Together: Family-Centered Practices to Help Practitioners and Families Work Together - Captioned Version](#)
- [CADRE Webinar- Inclusive Listening: Building Understanding, Supporting Collaboration \(Captioned Version - Part 1 & 2\)](#)
- [CADRE Webinar- Moving Research to Practice: Lessons Learned Regarding Meaningful Home-School Collaboration](#)
- [Educating Our Children Together: A Sourcebook for Effective Family-School-Community Partnerships](#)
- [Encouraging Meaningful Parent/Educator Collaboration: A Recent Review of Literature](#)
- [Expanded Collection of Creating Agreement Resources](#)
- [Listening Video](#)
- [Parents and Educators Working Toward Mutual Solutions](#)
- [Steps to Success: Communicating with Your Child's School](#)
- [The Impact of Parent/Family Involvement on Student Outcomes: An Annotated Bibliography of Research from the Past Decade](#)

### External Links

USDE Dual Capacity Model- <http://www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/partners-education.pdf>

Harvard Family Research Project- <http://www.hfrp.org/>

SEDL's WORKING SYSTEMICALLY IN ACTION: Engaging Family & Community- <http://www.sedl.org/ws/ws-fam-comm.pdf>

National PTA Standards- <http://www.pta.org/nationalstandards>

Family Engagement Framework: A Tool for California School Districts- <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr14/yr14rel107.asp>

Illinois State Board of Education FE Framework and resources- <http://www.isbe.net/family-engagement/html/framework.htm>

National Network of Partnership Schools at John Hopkin's University- <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/>

To locate special education Parent Center(s), visit <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/>.