



# **BACKGROUND**

The Spectrum of Family Engagement for Educational Equity is based on the Community Engagement to Ownership Spectrum, which was created by Facilitating Power & Movement Strategy Center to chart a pathway towards racial equity and environmental justice through the shift from community engagement to community ownership, referencing Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation, the International Association of Public Participation's Spectrum of Public Participation, and the work of grassroots organizing & advocacy groups working to hold local systems accountable to communities impacted by racial and environmental injustices. Social movements have been forging this pathway for generations. This tool simply offers guideposts along the way to support communities to make coordinated shifts towards educational equity.

Padres Unidos, a parent organizing group that was founded in 2016 to ensure parents on the eastside of Salinas, CA (as well as across other school districts), have a voice in their students' educational success, collaborated with Rosa González of Facilitating Power, to adapt the tool for use with school districts. This toolset is grounded in research on best practices in family/community involvement.





# **PURPOSE & USAGES**

The purpose of this toolset is to provide school districts and community/family organizing groups with shared language for being explicit about the level of family engagement in school planning & decision-making and the impact that level of engagement has on families and communities, as well on student outcomes. The spectrum is designed to:

- 1. Acknowledge marginalization as the status quo practice of current systems that have been historically designed to exclude certain populations, namely low-income communities, communities of color, women, youth, previously incarcerated people, and queer or gender non-conforming community members. These patterns of marginalization can negatively impact special education students, English Learners, LGBTQ Students, at-promise youth and their families. This understanding is important because if concerted efforts are not made to break-down existing barriers to participation, then by default marginalization occurs.
- **2. Assert a vision** for reimagining and rebuilding our public schools through culturally relevant family participation for educational equity through community ownership of schooling.
- **3. Articulate a developmental process** for moving from marginalization to community ownership that requires investment in community capacity to participate as well as the capacity to break-down systemic barriers to community participation.
- **4. Assess community/family engagement efforts** and progress toward deeper participation goals.

## ▶▶▶▶ INCREASED EFFICIENCY IN DECISION-MAKING AND SOLUTIONS IMPLEMENTATION ▶▶▶▶▶ EQUITY

STANCE TOWARDS COMMUNITY	IGNORE	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	DEFER TO
IMPACT	Marginalization	Placation	Tokenization	Voice	Delegated Power	Community Ownership
FAMILY & COM- MUNITY ENGAGE- MENT GOALS	Deny access to decision-making processes	Provide students, families & community with relevant information	Gather input from students, families, and community	Ensure student, family and community needs and assets are inte- grated into process & inform planning	Ensure student, family, and community capacity to play a leadership role in implementation of decisions that affect them	Foster lasting educational equity through community-driven schools that are culturally rooted and responsive to wholes people, whole communities
MESSAGE TO FAMILIES & COMMUNITY	"Your voice, needs & interests do not matter"	"We will keep you informed"	"We care what you think"	"You are making us think and act in ways that better serve students & families"	"Your leadership and expertise are critical to how we achieve equitable educational achievement"	"It's time to unlock our collective community capacity in service of lasting educational equity & community health"
ACTIVITIES	<ul> <li>Closed door meetings</li> <li>Misinformation</li> <li>Systematic Disenfranchisement</li> </ul>	<ul><li>Fact sheets</li><li>Open Houses</li><li>Presentations</li><li>Videos</li></ul>	<ul><li>Input sessions</li><li>Focus Groups</li><li>Surveys</li></ul>	<ul> <li>Community organizing &amp; advocacy</li> <li>Interactive Workshops &amp; forums with accessibility considerations</li> <li>Student &amp; Parent/Family Advisory Committees</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>MOU's with Community- Based Organizations</li> <li>Leadership Development</li> <li>Collaborative design and facilitation of community forums to ensure voice &amp; accessibility</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Student or Parent/Family led community forums to assess challenges and develop solutions</li> <li>Consensus building</li> <li>Participatory Action Research</li> <li>Participatory Budgeting</li> </ul>
IMPACT ON FAMILIES & COMMUNITY	<ul><li>Rejection</li><li>Anger</li><li>Insignificance</li></ul>	<ul><li>Powerlessness</li><li>Frustration</li><li>Desperation</li></ul>	<ul><li>Exploitation</li><li>Discrimination</li><li>Humiliation</li></ul>	<ul><li>Voice</li><li>Inclusion</li><li>Power</li></ul>	<ul><li>Leadership</li><li>Commitment</li><li>Capacity</li></ul>	<ul><li>Responsibility</li><li>Interconnection</li><li>Health</li></ul>
RESOURCE ALLOCATION RATIOS	<b>100%</b> Systems Admin	<b>70-90%</b> Systems Admin	<b>60-80%</b> Systems Admin	<b>50-60%</b> Systems Admin	<b>20-50%</b> Systems Admin	<b>80-100%</b> Community partners and community-driven processes
		<b>10-30%</b> Publicity	<b>20-40%</b> Consultation	<b>40-50%</b> Community Involvement	<b>50-70%</b> Community Partners	ideally generate new value and resources that can be invested in solutions



It took Padres Unidos four years of organizing other parents, attending board meetings, as well as meeting with district administration and members of the Board of Trustees to get the school district to implement more inclusive parent engagement practices. The goal is for parents to inform the decisions that impact students and families' health & well-being, such as budgetary priorities, approaches to school climate, and pedagogy. They had to build enough power on the outside to push the administration to make changes in their budget prioritization process that would allow parent voice and power to affect concrete changes – in this case an LCAP budget that reflects their priorities for their students. Changes in the way the system operates can help unlock channels within systems for community voice and power to translate into concrete changes.

With more spaces for parents to voice what they experience, to align on shared priorities, and to build the skills to advocate for those priorities, Padres Unidos is able to chip away at the disillusionment that so many parents in the district feel and begin developing a real base of parents prepared to participate in improving educational outcomes for their students. It's difficult to convince parents to participate in processes where they have no real voice. This is why it has been so crucial for Padres Unidos to work with administrative staff to build a more responsive and transparent process for engaging parents in decisions around local control funding formula priorities. Padres Unidos has assumed the responsibility of documenting parent priorities and assessing the budget to make sure they are reflected. They then share their analysis with the Board of Trustees and mobilize parents & other community members to board meetings to advocate for the best possible budget for school success. They are working both inside and outside the system to ensure that parent voices matter.



"When I first started organizing around education equity, I thought that power lies in systems, but I quickly learned that real power is in communities."

### **Alma Cervantes**

Founder of Padres Unidos & Educational Equity Organizer, Building Healthy Communities







# PARENT & STUDENT ORGANIZING ALONG THE SPECTRUM

## **Outside Organizing:**

Building the leadership and power of students and/or parents and other community members to define their priorities for education equity and put pressure on the school system to make the necessary changes

**Inside Organizing:** building accountable relationships with people who work within the school system to facilitate the necessary changes



Connect with other parents or your youth and share your experiences of being excluded; identify your shared concerns

## INSIDE

Ask the school or district leaders for information about your concerns.

Find an organization that does research on your issues of of concern and partner with them to make sure you have the information you need.

Request transparency in the decision-making process (ex: How will our inout be used? When will you be communicating back to us about the decisions made?)

Start defining together how you DO want to be involved and advocate for that

### INSIDE

Identify allies within the district who can help you navigate the system

### **OUTSIDE**

Recruit and build new parent and or student leaders so that you always have the capacity to assert your voice and the power to get your demands met. Decide together what your vision, values and priorities are

## **INSIDE**

Set clear collaboration guidelines with the school or district to make sure your needs are met. Work together to solve shared challenges. Be clear what your strengths and needs are

## **OUTSIDE**

Continue organizing new leaders and building power in the community so that you have leverage with the system leaders

### **INSIDE/OUTSIDE**

Develop a vision for schools that are truly driven by the communities they serve. Describe the curriculum, school culture, decision-making practices, etc. Identify opportunities to put the vision into action. Train up parents, students and other community members to lead





Educators and school district administrators have a significant role to play in breaking down barriers to family education. The following steps articulate activities and actions educational leadership can take, in partnership with family organizing groups, to advance along each phase of the spectrum.

Provide families and the community with relevant information regarding current inequities and plans to address them.

**INFORM** 

Seek input from students, parents/families, and the community to inform solutions to address educational inequities. Provide information as to how decisions and plans are made

**CONSULT** 

INVOLVE

them.

Promote family participation in school site councils to ensure student, parent, and community needs and assets are integrated into process & inform planning. Open up clear decision-making channels for families to participate in the develoment, implementation, and evaluation of solutions that impact

**COLLABORATE** 

Partner directly with parent groups, student groups, and/or community-based organizations dedicated to educational equity to design and implement solutions. Allow for necessary shifts in practice to make processes culturally relevant and accessible.

**DEFER TO** 

Foster community ownership of educational equity by co-developing community schools that serve as hubs for a holistic approach to educational success and neighborhood well-being, driven by the leadership of the families they serve.

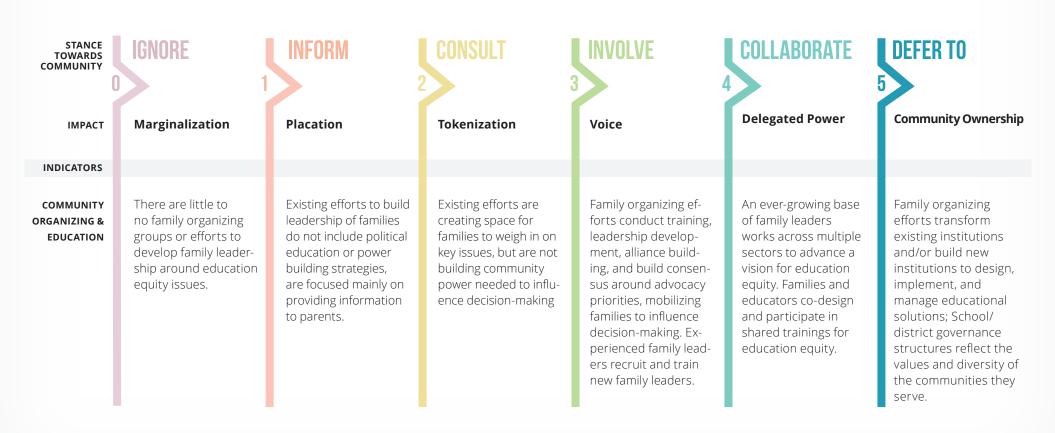


# RUBRIC TO ASSESS AUTHENTIC FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOL PLANNING FOR EDUCATION EQUITY\*

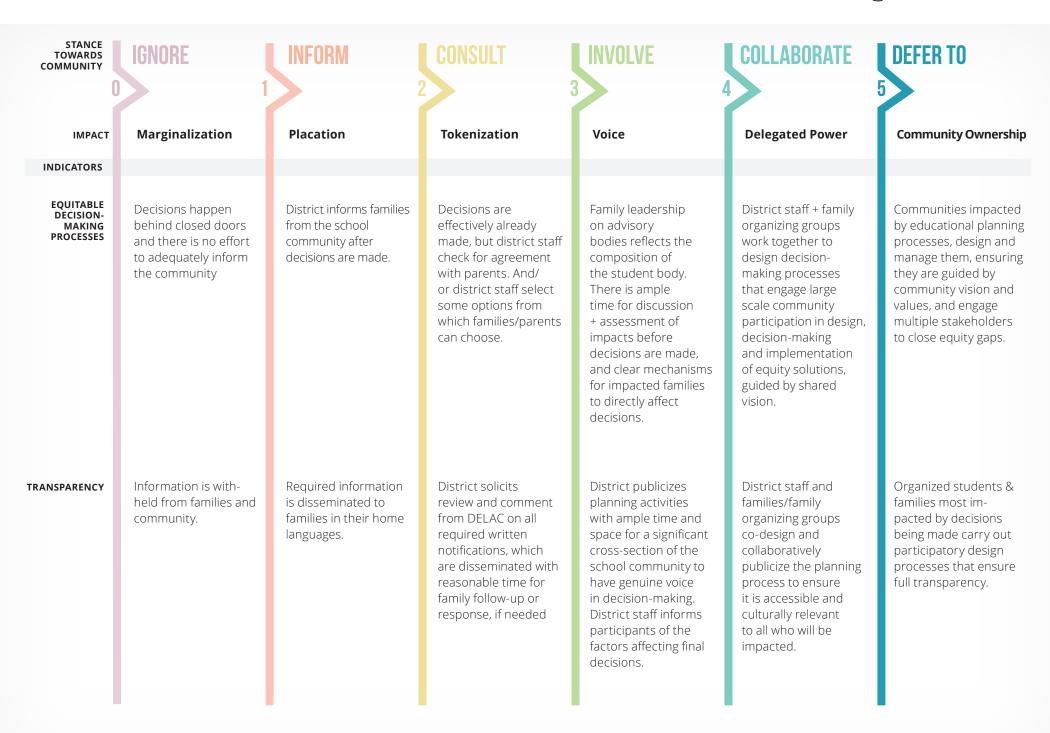
This rubric can be used to facilitate reflections and collaborative evaluations of a school district's family engagement practices. It is important that parents and school district staff participate in the reflection or evaluation together and allow the tool to serve as shared language and metrics for evolving family engagement practices. Ideally, families and community members have a chance to go through the evaluation or reflection process before entering into conversations with district staff, giving them a chance to make sense of the rubric on their own terms before engaging in negotiations with district staff as to improvements that are needed. We also recommend focusing on progress made as well as improvements needed. Finally, an outside facilitator trusted by the community is also helpful in ensuring the reflection or evaluation is done equitably and resulted in tangible next steps for improving family engagement.

An agenda could follow this basic flow:

- **1. Set the context:** Why is family involvement so important to our goals for student success?
- **2. Review the rubric:** Why these indicators?
- **3. Use the rubric:** to assess current practice (individually and then in small groups of parents and school district staff)
- **4. Identify areas of improvement:** needed and action steps to achieve those improvements (big and small).



<sup>\*</sup> Essential elements of strong parent involvement programs





STANCE TOWARDS COMMUNITY	IGNORE 1	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	DEFER TO
IMPACT	Marginalization	Placation	Tokenization	Voice	Delegated Power	Community Ownership
INDICATORS						
COMMUNITY RESOURCING & ACCESSIBILITY	Resources are not allocated to family participation in the decisions that impact them. Families do not feel welcome on campus and/or at district meetings.	Existing resources are used to disseminate information to families in languages families speak, but families and/or community members believe their voices are not fully welcome in planning.	Existing resources are used to disseminate information and for periodic meetings where families can review and respond to priorities and plans; many families may still experience barriers to participation.	The school district has a budgetary line item for family participation to ensure for effective planning. Funds are made available to ensure access, such as translation, childcare, etc. A position is funded to coordinate effective family engagement.	The district and family organizing groups work together to identify resourcing needs and to collaboratively ensure families are resourced to participate in planning, and help shape it.	Local educational budgets are designed around ensuring there are resourced leadership pathways for students and families to play central roles in the design and implementation of educational equity solutions.
DISTRICT CAPACITY & TRAINING	Family engagement and education equity are not district/school priorities	District/School staff have named equity as priorities but not yet backed by actual capacity or training	District/School staff have received basic training in the value and practice of family engagement	District/School staff are consistently trained to implement and assess family engagement practices that ensure families have a voice in equity goals & solutions.	District/School staff collaborate with family organizing groups to improve engagement practices, advance equity goals, and formalize leadership pathways	Thriving leadership pathways ensure educators and educational leaders reflect community values and demographics. Educational equity practice evolves via on-going capacity-building.
EQUITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS THROUGHOUT	There is no assessment of the potential equity impacts of the decisions and plans being made, nor of family engagement.	Data on achievement gaps is available, but not fully considered in the planning process. Family engagement included as a district/principal evaluation benchmark.	Families are consulted about the equity impacts of possible decisions and plans, but it not clear how their input impacts decision-making. Families are surveyed to assess family engagement.	Equity impact assessments are carried out with community participation to avoid unintended negative impacts on families already bearing the brunt of current inequities; Families are surveyed to assess family engagement	Stakeholders collaboratively design, implement, and analyze equity impact assessments to ensure plans close educational equity gaps, and carry out comprehensive assessments of family engagement.	Family-driven organizations are resourced to support equitable implementation and evaluation of educational equity solutions in ways that support on-going learning and community leadership to close educational equity gaps