



**Harvard Family  
Research Project**



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## **How to Develop a Logic Model for Districtwide Family Engagement Strategies**

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For family engagement to improve student learning, a wide range of stakeholders—from parents to principals to teachers—must share responsibility in developing, implementing, and assessing their school district’s family engagement strategy. In order to help each of these stakeholder groups define their roles, superintendents and central administrators must communicate the district’s family engagement vision, strategy, and expected outcomes. A useful way to convey this information is through a logic model, which visually depicts a district’s family involvement efforts and the changes it hopes to achieve.

*How to Develop a Logic Model for Districtwide Family Engagement Strategies* is a step-by-step guide to help you understand and develop a logic model for districtwide family engagement efforts. This tool is designed to accompany *Seeing is Believing: Promising Practices for How School Districts Promote Family Engagement*, a policy brief created by Harvard Family Research Project and the National PTA (see text box at right). *How to Develop a Logic Model* clarifies the steps between family engagement efforts and better learning outcomes for children and youth. In addition, we offer a sample logic model based on promising practices highlighted in *Seeing is Believing*, as well as lessons learned from research and evaluation studies that shape the outcomes of family engagement. This tool can be used for program planning, implementation, and evaluation to communicate accomplishments and identify areas that need improvement.

Although we designed this tool for district-level family engagement strategies, other organizations such as schools and nonprofits can adapt the process to create strong family engagement systems. Keep in mind that the steps and sample logic model components presented here represent a menu of options to choose from, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach to building a logic model for family engagement efforts.

## What is a logic model?

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A logic model illustrates the connection between what an organization does (e.g., its activities) and what it hopes to achieve (e.g., its goals and outcomes). A logic model could look like a flowchart, with key strategy elements arranged inside a series of boxes connected by arrows, or it could be formatted within a table. Regardless of the design, a logic model represents the progression of how various parts of a strategy connect to one another. It’s important to note that, like an architect’s scale model of a building, a logic model is not meant to be a detailed “blueprint” of what an organization must do to achieve its goals. Instead, it’s a place to outline your major

### **Seeing is Believing: Promising Practices for How School Districts Promote Family Engagement**

This policy brief examines the role of school districts in promoting family engagement by spotlighting how six school districts across the country have used innovative strategies to create and sustain family engagement “systems at work.”

Across these districts are three core components of successful systems: creating district-wide strategies, building school capacity, and reaching out to and engaging families. Drawing from districts’ diverse approaches, this brief highlights promising practices to ensure quality, oversight, and results from their family engagement efforts. It also proposes a set of recommendations for how federal, state, and local policies can promote district-level family engagement efforts that support student learning.

**Download this brief at [www.hfrp.org/SeeingIsBelieving](http://www.hfrp.org/SeeingIsBelieving).**

strategies, examine how they fit together, and analyze whether they can be expected to add up to the changes that stakeholders want to see.

## How Do You Create a Logic Model?

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There are many approaches to creating a logic model, but certain elements are common to most. By following the five steps outlined in this tool, your school district can develop a logic model to illustrate its family engagement strategy.

### Before You Begin

It's important to understand and be able to articulate the reasons your district will create a logic model. Having a clear purpose will help guide the creation process and keep you on track while making strategic decisions. Your reasons may include:

- Facilitating program planning by creating a shared understanding of how your district plans to reach its goals;
- Determining which goals are realistic, given available resources and priorities;
- Charting the progress of your work and intended outcomes, which can guide the evaluation and improvement of your strategy;
- Communicating what your district wants to achieve and how it will get there, including specific areas of focus.

**Logic Model Tip:  
Share Responsibility with Stakeholders**

A successful family engagement strategy and its associated logic model are co-constructed with the input of the stakeholders who will implement, receive, and assess your services.

Once your district has decided on the primary purpose of its logic model, inviting others to help create it will make it as strong and relevant as possible. Participants could include families, community partners, evaluators, principals, teachers, and other administrators.

Although your logic model may serve many purposes in the future, your district would benefit by focusing on its current situation so that decisions about what to include fit together cohesively and serve your immediate needs. Once you are clear on the main purpose of the logic model, you will be able to share your explicit goals with the stakeholders you invite to be part of the logic model creation process. (See the Logic Model Tip box on sharing responsibility with stakeholders.)

### Step One: Define the Goals That Will Shape Your Strategy

Goals are the long-term transformations a district hopes to accomplish and can help summarize a district's vision for family engagement and the results it hopes to achieve. Achieving goals may require forging partnerships between district administrators, families, schools, and communities rather than relying solely on the actions of one specific program or person within a system.

**District reflection: What are the goals that will help your district decide how it will implement and assess its family engagement efforts?**

Enter your district's goals in the first row of the logic model. The inputs, activities, and outcomes that you include in subsequent steps will help build the case for reaching these goals. In the sample logic model at the end of this tool, we provide some possible student, family, school, and district goals that may guide your own logic model, including the following:

- Children and youth are better prepared for post-secondary success
- Family members are wise consumers and active partners in their children's education
- Schools are transformed, high-performing, and accountable institutions
- The school district has a systemic and co-constructed family engagement strategy

**Step Two: Identify Your District's Inputs**

Inputs are the financial, intellectual, political, community, and organizational assets that your district invests to ensure that the specific activities it undertakes will have an impact on its desired outcomes. Inputs lay the groundwork for the rest of your logic model.

**District reflection: What inputs— such as vision, leadership, resources, and infrastructure—need to be in place in order for your district to reach its goals?**

Enter your district's inputs in the far left column of your logic model. Refer to our sample logic model for the system structures and processes deemed important by the districts profiled in *Seeing is Believing*, some of which include:

- A shared vision for family engagement
- A connection between family engagement and student learning
- Strategic investments in programming and staff
- Robust communication systems
- Evaluation for accountability and continuous learning

Your district may choose to focus on these inputs or define other assets required to support its specific family engagement strategy.

**Step Three: Specify Which Activities Your District Will Implement**

Now it's time to determine the activities, programs, interventions, and services needed to reach your district's goals. Your list should encompass the actions you will take with schools and families, and across the district. A logic model captures activities in broad strokes; your district may also want to develop work plans that align with the logic model activities and provide further detail about each activity's timeframe and priority, necessary steps for each activity, and who will be responsible for implementing those steps.

**District reflection: What will your district do to promote family engagement? What activities will the staff in your district perform? What services will you provide and how often?**

Enter the activities your district will undertake in the column to the right of your inputs. In our sample logic model, we highlight activities at three strategy levels used by districts profiled in *Seeing is Believing*. For example:

- **District-level activities:** Include family engagement in staff performance assessment.
- **School-level activities:** Provide ongoing professional development on family engagement to school staff.
- **Family-level activities:** Create data systems that collect and share with families information such as student achievement data.

**Logic Model Tip:  
Make Outcomes SMART**

While goals express the big-picture vision for what you hope to accomplish, outcomes should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ction-oriented, **R**ealistic, and **T**imed. The “smarter” your outcomes are, the easier it will be to manage performance and assess progress along the way.

#### **Step Four: Define the Desired Outcomes of Your District’s Activities**

Outcomes are the results a district expects from its family engagement strategy. They include the changes in attitudes, skills, behaviors, and knowledge that can be attributed to your activities and that use your inputs. As you work with partners to create a shared understanding of which outcomes to target, consider the following:

**Alignment.** Your district’s outcomes will be most effective if they are aligned with and linked to your activities so that there is a logical flow between your efforts and what you expect to change as a result of your work. For example, a district that wants to improve home–school communication would see better outcomes by providing ongoing, direct support to both teachers and families to encourage bi-directional communication, rather than focusing on only teachers or only families.

Alignment also means ensuring that your district’s outcomes are realistic given the intensity and duration of your activities. For example, a district that provides teachers with a one-time family engagement training session may expect an outcome of teachers’ becoming more aware of the importance of family engagement, but a district that provides family engagement training throughout the year may more realistically expect that teachers will actually change how they reach out to and communicate with families.

**Timeframe.** Logic models allow the designation of short-term, intermediate, and/or long-term outcomes. A family engagement strategy—and its desired outcomes—may depend on a series of assumptions that unfold over time. One such sequence of assumptions could run as follows: Training teachers will encourage them to change their

communication and behavior with families, which, in turn, affects a family's engagement at home and at school, which then improves students' academic achievement.

In our sample logic model, we posit that the long-term outcomes of family engagement efforts center, ultimately, on children's learning; one example of a long-term outcome is improved student attendance. There are important short-term and interim changes for families, schools, and districts that create a path to reaching such an outcome. Short-term outcomes can include changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and interim outcomes include changes in behavior.

**District reflection: What changes do you expect as a result of your district's family engagement efforts? What will family members, school and district staff, and/or students believe, know, or do differently?**

Enter your district's desired outcomes in the column to the right of your activities and specify their timeframe. Also specify who or what will change at the district, school, family, or child level (marked as D, S, F, and C, respectively, in the sample logic model). The outcomes listed in our sample logic model represent a broad spectrum of potential changes; you may choose to narrow or expand this list based on your district's focus, goals, and accountability needs. For example:

- **Short-term outcomes:** Increased awareness of the importance of family engagement; increased awareness of rights to and opportunities for family engagement (D, S, F)
- **Interim outcomes:** Improved home-school communication and family-school staff relationships (D, S, F); better home environment and parenting to support learning (F); improved school culture (S)
- **Long-term outcomes:** Improved work habits and motivation; increased school attendance (C)

**Logic Model Tip:  
Selecting Performance Measures**

Your district can choose performance measures based on:

**Age and Stage.** What is realistic to assess, given the development and maturity of your district's family engagement activities?

**Context.** Do your performance measures reflect the strengths and limitations of your district's family engagement efforts?

**Availability of data sources.** Do you have the financial, intellectual, and organizational resources to collect the data for your performance measures?

**Usefulness.** Will the information collected through your performance measures be useful to your district and its stakeholders?

## Step Five: Select Performance Measures to Track Progress

Performance measures are the data that your district collects to assess how much you did, how well you did it, and what impact you had. There are generally two types of performance measures:

**Measures of effort**, sometimes referred to as “outputs,” describe whether and to what extent activities were implemented as you had intended. These measures describe whether the district staff, school staff, and families were supported as you had planned. Such measures can be calculated by counting the number of attendees at an event, or materials that your district produced and disseminated. Measures of effort can also describe what participants thought of the activities and information you offered through participant satisfaction surveys.

**Measures of effect** convey whether or not you are meeting your desired outcomes. Unlike measures of effort, which demonstrate what activities your district implemented and how it implemented them, measures of effect help track whether your activities have made a difference. For example, an evaluation of a district’s professional development program for parent liaisons might include measures of effort, such as how many liaisons attended a training session about sponsoring a family-friendly walkthrough of their schools, *and* measures of effect, such as what percentage of participating schools showed improvements on their level of family-friendliness.

While your outcomes lay out what you hope to accomplish, performance measures target your district’s current evaluation efforts and are meant to be narrower in scope. They are especially useful for making connections between the work you are doing to implement your family engagement strategy and outcomes that would be otherwise difficult to measure. While you may not be able to prove that your family engagement efforts led to longer-term outcomes, you can make a plausible case if you have documented progress on measures of effort and effect along the way.

For example, if your district wants to reach the long-term outcome of improved literacy achievement, but cannot make a causal connection from its achievement test scores to its family engagement strategy, you can highlight the relationship between the higher scores and the number of hours parents and teachers attended training sessions, modifications in classroom reading assignments, changes in supportive literacy behaviors at home, and parent reports of student reading confidence.

### **District reflection: How will you assess your district’s family engagement activities and progress towards desired outcomes?**

Enter your performance measures in the bottom row of your district’s logic model, including measures of both effort and effect. Remember that for every activity you implement and outcome you target, there can be multiple performance measures that demonstrate results, so you will need to select carefully. Our sample logic model lists a small subset of common performance measures, but you may choose others based on the

age and stage of your program, the context of your district's strategy, the availability of data, and the usefulness of the information. (See the Logic Model Tip box on the previous page about selecting performance measures.) Sample measures include:

**Measures of effort:** number of visits to district family involvement website; number of new school and district family engagement hires; percentage of participants reporting that training sessions were useful.

**Measures of effect:** percentage of participants reporting that they gained new skills to enable better family engagement; percentage of family members reporting more literacy activity at home; percent increase in attendance at parent-teacher conferences.

### **Next Steps: After You Have Finished Your Logic Model**

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Completing your logic model does not complete the planning process. Once you've documented your strategy, revisit it often and learn from it. Logic models can be useful guides to help answer questions about what needs to be changed or improved in your district's family engagement strategy to make it more effective and efficient.

A good logic model is dynamic and can respond to changes in context, focus, and purpose over time. But, to retain its relevance, any logic model must be supported by a process that brings stakeholders together regularly to ask the necessary critical questions. Families, community members, school staff, district administrators, and evaluation staff all share responsibility in ensuring that your district's family engagement strategy unfolds as you had intended it to and makes acceptable progress towards your documented goals. After you develop a logic model, your district would benefit by having a process in place to continue these conversations and to refine and revise your logic model over time.



## Sample Logic Model for a Districtwide Family Engagement Strategy

(1) Goals		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children and youth are better prepared for post-secondary success.</li> <li>- Family members are wise consumers and active partners in their child's education.</li> <li>- Schools are transformed, high-performing, and accountable institutions.</li> <li>- The school district has a systemic and co-constructed family engagement strategy.</li> </ul>		
(2) Inputs	(3) Activities	(4) Outcomes
<p>Shared vision for family engagement</p> <p>Family engagement connected to student learning</p> <p>Strategic investments in programming and staff</p> <p>Robust communication systems</p> <p>Evaluation for accountability and continuous learning</p>	<p><b>Foster district-wide strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Align family engagement with district learning goals and standards</li> <li>- Create a well-staffed office for family engagement</li> <li>- Include family engagement in classroom, school, and district performance measures</li> </ul> <p><b>Build school capacity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for family engagement to all staff</li> <li>- Hire family and community liaisons</li> <li>- Implement school-based action teams for family engagement</li> <li>- Create mechanisms for administrators and educators to share lessons learned</li> </ul> <p><b>Reach out to and engage families</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create feedback loops with families to plan, implement, and assess activities</li> <li>- Provide leadership and skills development training to families</li> <li>- Create data systems that collect and share information with families</li> </ul>	<p><b>Short-term outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased awareness about the importance of family engagement (D, S, F)</li> <li>- Increased awareness about rights and opportunities for family engagement (D, S, F)</li> <li>- Improved attitudes for shared responsibility, role efficacy, and coordination of family engagement (D, S, F)</li> <li>- More knowledge and skills about strategies for family engagement (D, S, F)</li> <li>- More knowledge of strategies and resources to support student learning (S, F)</li> <li>- Better understanding of child academic progress, strengths, and weaknesses (S, F)</li> </ul> <p><b>Interim outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved home-school communication and family-school staff relationships (S, F)</li> <li>- Better home environment and parenting to support learning (F)</li> <li>- Improved parent-child relationships (F, C)</li> <li>- Improved school culture, including trust among staff (S)</li> <li>- More participation and use of programs and resources that support student learning (C)</li> </ul> <p><b>Long-term outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved work habits and motivation (C)</li> <li>- Increased school attendance (C)</li> <li>- More enrollment in more challenging courses (C)</li> <li>- Smoother transitions across schools and grades (C)</li> <li>- Increased student achievement (C)</li> <li>- Decreased likelihood to engage in high risk behaviors (C)</li> </ul>
(5) Performance Measures		
<p><b>Measures of effort (selected examples)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of hours of professional development/training provided</li> <li># of participants that attended PD/training events</li> <li># of hits to district family involvement website</li> <li># of new school and district family engagement hires</li> <li>% of participants reporting that trainings were useful</li> <li>% of schools in compliance with all Title I requirements</li> </ul>		<p><b>Measures of effect (selected examples)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of participants reporting that they gained new skills to enable better family engagement</li> <li>% of family members reporting more literacy activity at home</li> <li>% increase in attendance at parent-teacher conferences</li> <li>Changes in school/district policies that promote family engagement</li> <li>% change in student attendance at participating schools</li> </ul>

D - district or district staff outcome; S - school or school staff outcome; F - family or home outcome; C - child or student outcome

## About Harvard Family Research Project

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Since 1983, Harvard Family Research Project has helped stakeholders develop and evaluate strategies to promote the well being of children, youth, families, and their communities. We work primarily within three areas that support children’s learning and development: early childhood education, out-of-school time programming, and family and community support in education. Underpinning all of our work is a commitment to evaluation for strategic decision making, learning, and accountability.

Building on our knowledge that schools alone cannot be responsible for children’s learning, we also focus national attention on complementary learning. Complementary learning is the idea that a systemic approach, which integrates school and nonschool supports, can better ensure that all children have the skills they need to succeed.

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