



Family Engagement

TARGETED INDICATORS

ENGAGED FAMILIES

STUDENTS EARN HIGH GRADES, PASS COURSES, ACHIEVE HIGH TEST SCORES

9TH GRADE ON TRACK

LOW ABSENTEEISM RATES

STUDENTS CONTINUE TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION



OREGON EXAMPLE

Earl Boyles Elementary School in the Davis Douglas School District was struggling to attract parents to participate in school events when Principal Ericka Guynes was hired in 2008. Guynes hosted conversation meetings with parents to learn more about how they wanted to be involved with the school.

Other strategies included:

- Providing translation services in meetings and translated written materials when appropriate.
- Using student-led, rather than teacher-led conferences.
- Being responsive to parent and family requests and contributions
- Collaborative Book Study with staff and families participating together.

WHY WAS THE STRATEGY CHOSEN?

Family support is critical to student success. Staff members at many schools need to better understand the engagement barriers parents experience, such as providing volunteer forms in only one language.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STRATEGY

The concept of “family engagement” assumes schools alone cannot meet students’ needs (Redefining Family Engagement for Student Success 2014). Students are most successful when supported by family, schools and their community, especially when these partners work collaboratively. This whole child approach to education focuses on preparing students for the challenges of today and tomorrow by addressing the students’ comprehensive needs through partnerships.

The Harvard Family Research Project outlines three principles required for family engagement to have a meaningful effect on student learning. These three principles are:

- Family engagement needs be a shared responsibility among families, educators and community organizations in engaging families in meaningful ways that best supports their children’s learning and development.
- Family engagement is continuous across a child’s life, from early childhood through the high school years.
- Family engagement is reinforced across multiple settings where children learn, from home, to school, to after-school programs, to community organizations.

Many schools strive to engage families. The Federal Way Public Schools (FWPS) family engagement initiative is an example of a successful implementation. The [Family and Community Partnership office](#) operates through school-based family liaisons in 23 elementary schools to work with parents to support their child’s success; foster communication and collaboration between parents and educators; and provide tools and resources for parents to become “informed, prepared, and involved” at home, school and the community.

They have created a [handbook](#) and workshops to build parent and family capacity to support their children’s success and have translated the resource into multiple languages.



EVIDENCE THE STRATEGY IS EFFECTIVE

Research shows that meaningful family engagement is one of the strongest predictors of children's success in school. Studies over the past 50 years have demonstrated a positive relationship between family engagement and student achievement for students of all backgrounds, including social class, gender, and ethnicity (see Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Weiss et al, 2009). Students with engaged families are more likely to earn high grades and test scores, pass their classes, earn more credits, be promoted, attend school regularly, graduate and continue to post-secondary education than their peers with less-engaged families (see Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Weiss et al, 2009).

Traditionally, family engagement efforts are fragmented and disconnected from instructional practice and school turnaround initiatives rather than being part of a systemic, integrated and sustained reform strategy leading to improved student outcomes. The Harvard Family Research Project, which has been at the forefront of this examination, states that "families, schools, and communities must together construct family involvement, actively taking part and sharing responsibility in building mutually respectful relationships and partnerships" (Weiss et al., 2009, p. 4). Specifically, research supports the notion that when student learning and school improvement are approached through partnerships where schools and families are seen as equal partners, conditions are optimal for family engagement to flourish (Patrikakou, E. N., Weissberg, R. P., Redding, S. & Walberg, H. J., 2005).

FUNDING OF THE STRATEGY

Much of the effort is woven into the duties of existing personnel: an AmeriCorps worker and a liaison funded by the Children's Institute, both Spanish speakers, helped with early outreach. The SUN Coordinator helps with scheduling and organization of the parent group.

THE STRATEGY IS WORKING IN OREGON

At Earl Boyles Elementary, parent and family engagement looks like:

- More than 90% of families participate in student conferences.
- Chronic absenteeism rates are consistently below the state average for K-5 students.
- Student mobility rates are among the lowest in the school district.
- Parents connect with other parents to broaden overall family engagement.
- Six parent ambassadors who speak multiple languages are trained to help families network, organize resource fairs and connect families to other resources.
- Parents and families helped with the designs for the new wing of the school built in 2014.
- Parents organized a movie night at school that ties in student reading logs.

For more information, visit www.oregon.gov/ode.

LINKS TO RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED474521.pdf>

Patrikakou, E. N., Weissberg, R. P., Redding, S., & Walberg, H. J. (Eds.). (2005). *Schoolfamily partnerships for children's success*. New York: Teacher's College Press

Reschly, A. L., & Christenson, S. L. (2009). *Parents as Essential Partners for Fostering Students' Learning Outcomes*. In R. G. Michael J. Furlong, *Handbook of Positive Psychology in Schools* (pp. 257-272). New York: Routledge.

Weiss, H. B., Bouffard, S. M., Bridglall, B. L., & Gordon, E. W. (2009). *Reframing family involvement in education: Supporting families to support educational equity* (Equity Matters: Research Review No. 5). New York, NY: Campaign for Educational Equity at Teachers College, Columbia University.
http://www.equitycampaign.org/i/a/document/12018_equitymattersvol5_web.pdf

Oregon Youth Authority
http://www.oregon.gov/OYA/pages/youth_family_guide.aspx

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