

# BUILD STRONG DISTRICT & SCHOOL FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES

REVISED DRAFT (post-ERN discussion) – 6.28.17 (changes in bold)

## Context

Authentic and culturally relevant family engagement is a vital component for student success. It is also a powerful equity lever. Schools typically do not effectively engage families as partners in their child's education. Schools sometimes engage families as volunteers or for fundraising help, but rarely as true instructional partners. This is true across race and income lines.

The lack of effective engagement for families of color also exacerbates the cultural divide that often exists between teachers, who are predominately white, and families of color. Teachers may hold assumptions about students that are untrue, which prevents the kind of dialogue and mutual learning that might help teachers better understand their students and help parents take an active role in their child's education.

## What needs to change?

- Family engagement must become a belief, rather than a job, and be recognized as a core attribute to building a strong educational system; **family engagement needs to be explicitly defined.**
- Schools need to see families as essential partners in their children's education rather than complications or problems; **schools need to make an effort to make families feel welcome, engaging them in their own language and using a "strengths first" approach (calling and delivering positive messages); engagement needs to be grounded in relationship building and cultural competence; power dynamics need to be checked (don't impose views on families or ask families to "fit the mold").**
- **Schools need to value and acknowledge that families can bring new ideas into the school.**
- **Schools need to learn what families value in education (i.e. ask families what they would like to see at the school, regular check-ins).**
- Effective family engagement practice is routinely taught as a core component of both teacher preparation and principal leadership training.
- Best practice approaches (**e.g. direct engagement with parents, not through students as messengers**) are implemented as a matter of course and tied to student learning.
- Strong data that can tie family engagement with student achievement.
- Families have multiple opportunities to become partners and effective leaders in their school district.
- **Increase engagement in secondary schools.**
- **Broaden understanding of "families" to include extended family members.**
- **Engage families not only through PTA, but also through other channels.**

## How can we track progress?

- Percent of parents who feel knowledgeable and confident in their ability to support their child's learning from pre-k through college (existing indicator).
- Percent of parents who believe their school provides a welcoming and culturally responsive learning environment (existing indicator).

STRONG FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES AND FUNCTIONS



# BUILD STRONG DISTRICT & SCHOOL FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Percent of parents who have leadership opportunities and influence on decision-making at their school or district (existing indicator).
- Evidence of change in policy and practice at the school and district level.
- **Relationship between family engagement practices and school climate (e.g. teacher/student relationships, school culture).**
- Social emotional learning and academic measures.
- Use of Title 1, Learning Assistance Program and Washington’s Basic Education Act dollars for family engagement.
- Leadership track and opportunities for parents.
- Parent decision-making bodies beyond district office (e.g. PTA), such as in school buildings; **demographic composition of those bodies and representation/reflection of family demographics.**
- Parent and student surveys; **track demographic characteristics of respondents (by race/ethnicity, income); surveys are translated for meaning (not literal translation); survey results are followed up on. [Does it make a difference whether surveys are sent out by district vs. another entity?]**
- Home visits (with clear goals around student success).
- **Don’t leave out qualitative data.**
- **Collect data in-site at “culture nights” (an example of a “third space”).**

## Initiatives & partners involved in this work:

- Best Starts for Kids (King County)
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Building Changes
- College Spark Washington
- Community and Parents for Public Schools (CPPS)
- CCER – regional work with districts, field building support
- Community Network Council
- **Human Connection Relationship!**
- Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) - Kwesi Rollins
- **KEEP**
- King County/Seattle Foundation Communities of Opportunity
- King County Housing Authority (KCHA)
- OneAmerica
- **OSPI Native Education Office**
- **Puget Sound ESP**
- St. Vincent de Paul
- School District Family Engagement Leads
- Seattle Council PTSA
- Seattle Housing Authority
- SOAR
- Social Venture Partners
- Somali Youth and Family Club
- South King Council of Human Services
- Southeast Seattle Education Coalition
- Transformative Solutions - Michele Brooks
- University of Washington College of Education
- VROOM
- Washington Family Engagement Network
- Washington STEM Early Math

## STRONG FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES AND FUNCTIONS

