

Family Engagement

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Two Truths and a Lie

Two Truths And A Lie:

This icebreaker Two Truths and a Lie, can be used to get a meeting started, build community, and see how well we know each other. We will break up into our grade level teams and share two truths and a lie about ourselves. This activity encourages us to be open and celebrates individuality among the group.

Agenda:

- Introduction
- Tips for Cultivating Family Friendly Engagement
- Building Up Family Engagement
- Cultural Competence and Cultural Humility
- Video on Cultural Humility by Dr. Mosley
- Family Engagement Ideas for 2021-2022 School Year
- Closing

Introduction:

It's vital to understand that promoting educational equity necessitates family engagement. It is when families are authentically engaged and listened to as active partners that our students reach their full potential and graduate college and career ready."

—Dianna R. Wentzell, Ed.D., Connecticut State Education Commissioner

Have you ever stopped and asked yourself, "What is family engagement in schools?" If you were to ask 10 colleagues about the meaning of family engagement, it is likely you would get 10 different responses describing variations of traditional parent participation or family involvement activities. This is unsurprising given that the roles and expectations of parents and schools have been rapidly changing and evolving in recent years. We know the critical role that parents and family members have in their children's learning, development, and well-being from birth on. Research indicates that young children as well as older students benefit when families are meaningfully and continuously engaged in their children's education. Family engagement contributes to positive student outcomes, including improved student achievement, decreased disciplinary issues, improved parent-teacher and teacher-student relationships, and improved school environment. More research-based practices that foster meaningful family engagement and partnership in children's learning and development are being adopted across all grade levels.

Meaningful family engagement occurs when educators and family members work in partnership to implement system improvements and programs that matter in the lives of children and their families. Whereas educators bring professional experience to the planning table, family members share “**lived experience**.” **Lived experience** represents the direct encounters that families have with services, programs, policies, and systems as well as critical knowledge parents have about their children and neighborhoods. Whether collaborating about a new policy or addressing an Individualized Education Program (IEP), a family’s **lived experience** provides an up-close and real-time perspective on what is needed and working as well as what is not working for their child and school community. Broad family representation that reflects the diversity of the school community is essential in planning, decision making, and co-creating education policies and programs that positively impact every child, youth, and family.

Rather than a traditional approach, data has now shown that a differential approach is needed to reach and engage families of all children who are academically struggling and most at risk. Therefore, a family's **lived experience** and perspective is essential in prioritizing and framing their student's strengths, challenges, and needs. Collectively, family perspectives and **lived experiences** present opportunities for mutual learning that prepare educators and families to collaborate in effectively addressing the academic and social-emotional challenges and needs of all students. The goal is to find intensive strategies as well as **culturally responsive** methods to build relationships, trust, and connections with families once considered hard to reach. The more families that support their children's learning at home, the more likely their children will do well in school and continue their education.

Tips for Cultivating Family Friendly Engagement:

Probably the most difficult phase of family engagement is laying the groundwork for meaningful and lasting family engagement, as educators we must dedicate the time needed to develop positive relationships and build trust with each family. The dialogue with families is the best way to communicate, build relationships, and learn about the family and their student's strengths and needs. Maintaining regular connections strengthens parent/teacher partnerships and contributes to a child's academic success. The following tips can help pave the way for meaningful family engagement.

1. Strive to establish good relationships with families by getting to know each individual family from the start. Families appreciate knowing that you share common interests regarding their children. This investment of time early on will pay off during the school year. {Please turn and talk to the person on the side of you}:**How can teachers do this?**
2. Ask families how to correctly pronounce their child's first and last name if you are unsure. By doing this you are demonstrating respect and appreciation for their culture.
3. Show a genuine interest in recognizing and understanding each family's cultural background. Ask ahead of time if there are any cultural considerations that you need to be aware of that may affect their child's experience in your classroom.

Tips Continued:

4. Ask parents about their language or preferred time and method of communication. Review, process, and revise if needed the frequency of communication.
5. Advise families of their role as partners in their child's learning and development at home and school. Ensure that both school staff and parents review and fully understand their roles and expectations outlined in our Family Handbook. The Family Handbook can be found online in English and Spanish.
6. Learn about activities or routines implemented in their home to stimulate their child's learning as well as play and ask if any materials are needed to help with learning, such as books, writing instruments, and paper.
7. Reinforce the continued importance of a parent's primary role in their child's learning at home and explain how it complements progress at school.
8. Always be strength-based! Keep in mind that this could be a parent's first time experiencing feedback from an adult about their child's behavior and development. Use the hamburger approach when provide feedback.



Family Support

Your average

80%

64 responses

Change

▲ 7

since last survey

State Grouping average: **68%** Urban Core

School Type average: **69%** All Schools

School Type average: **74%** Elementary Schools

District average: **80%** SouthSide Charter School

State average: **69%** Rhode Island

How did people respond? _____

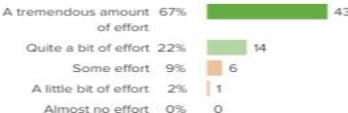
Q.1: How often do you have conversations with your child about what his/her class is learning at school?



▲ 12 from last survey

Favorable: **98%**

Q.2: How much effort do you put into helping your child learn to do things for himself/herself?



▲ 0 from last survey

Favorable: **89%**

Q.3: How well do you know your child's close friends?



▲ 10 from last survey

Favorable: **47%**

Q.4: How often do you help your child understand the content s/he is learning in school?



▲ 4 from last survey

Favorable: **86%**

Q.5: How often do you help your child engage in activities which are educational outside the home?



▲ 7 from last survey

Favorable: **63%**

Q.6: How often do you and your child talk when s/he is having a problem with others?



▲ 12 from last survey

Favorable: **91%**

Building Up Family Engagement:

As is common with any change, many families feel unsure about how to support their children in making a successful transition when starting in kindergarten for example from home, childcare, or preschool. Oftentimes, families must figure out on their own how the new school system works. Families commonly feel overwhelmed by new school policies. Children and families must adapt to longer school days, classroom protocols and procedures, and different methods of communication. School administrators, teachers, and staff have titles and roles that are unfamiliar to parents. Families of children with identified developmental and behavioral needs may have the added stress of figuring out how and where to get help for their children. While this may seem exciting, it can also signal a change for the family and their relationship with the school throughout their child's academic career. Schools are implementing different methods to smooth the transition from pre-K to kindergarten for children and to connect with families early. Starting next year I hope to be working jointly with pre-K programs in development and implementation of companion curriculums to bridge learning and prepare children and families for the structure and learning expectations of the kindergarten classroom. This year we held a very successful Kindergarten Orientation where we provided each family with materials as well as laying the groundwork for a successful year.

High-quality school/family relationships are recognized as having a positive influence on family and student engagement . How as educators do we find the time needed to build relationships with each family? Fortunately, group approaches that engage families in learning and discussion have been found to work in building family/school relationships. Classroom gatherings versus school-wide events create opportunities for family-to-family networking, which can be an ongoing source of support and information for families. However, as educators we also must also make time for one-on-one dialogue with each parent and encourage two-way communication at every opportunity. Planning such meetings must consider barriers to family participation, such as inconvenient meeting times, lack of transportation, and childcare needs. The best locations can be identified by asking families for their recommendations to help with any worry that they might have. Diversity in language and culture is another common barrier that keeps families away. When teachers, staff, or volunteers of a similar culture and language facilitate school events, they create comfortable and safe zones for diverse families to interact and ask questions in their preferred language. Our school does a terrific job removing roadblocks. This helps communicate awareness of diversity and thoughtfulness of family needs.

Family/school partnerships are most effective and sustainable when implemented as a collective effort between families and school staff. This is most beneficial when it is fully integrated with the school's overall mission and goals, supported by leadership, and provided with sufficient staffing. When all family members in a school community are meaningfully engaged, supported, and respected as equal partners, their "voice" and experiences are invaluable in creating innovative solutions that support a student's academic success and healthy development at home, at school, and in the community.

Cultural Competency and Cultural Humility:

Cultural competency is the ability to understand and respect the values and beliefs of people from other cultures. **Cultural competency** helps people to navigate cross-cultural interactions or relationships. It doesn't, however, take into account a person's experiences that may cause them to have prejudice, biases, or preconceived notions.

Cultural humility, on the other hand, aims to make the unconscious, conscious. By incorporating your experiences, how you navigate the world, and how you view your identity into how you interact with others. Ultimately, the goal is to understand how someone's culture can inform their beliefs, their habits, and the choices they make in life.

With an eye toward improving educational settings for all learners, in this video, we will watch Dr. Mosley task educators with looking at who they are, what they believe, and why. She explains how this can impact your relationships with students as well as families of different cultures.

Video of Dr. Juliana Mosley



Cultural Awareness and Action

Your average

90%

64 responses

State Grouping average: **65%** Urban Core

School Type average: **57%** All Schools

School Type average: **57%** Elementary Schools

District average: **90%** SouthSide Charter School

State average: **57%** Rhode Island

How did people respond?

Q.1: To the best of your knowledge, how often is your child given opportunities to learn about people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?



Favorable: **94%**

Q.2: How confident are you that adults at your child's school can have honest conversations with students about race?



Favorable: **88%**

Q.3: When there are major news events related to race, how important do you think it is for adults at your child's school to talk about them with students?



Favorable: **95%**

Q.4: To the best of your knowledge, when there are major news events related to race, how often do adults at your child's school talk about them with students?



Favorable: **84%**



Family Engagement

Your average

35%

64 responses

Change

▼ 2

since last survey

State Grouping average: **20%** Urban Core

School Type average: **15%** All Schools

School Type average: **18%** Elementary Schools

District average: **35%** SouthSide Charter School

State average: **15%** Rhode Island

How did people respond? _____

Q.1: How often do you meet in person with teachers at your child's school?



▲ 4 from last survey

Favorable: **37%**

Q.2: How involved have you been with a parent group(s) at your child's school?



▲ 6 from last survey

Favorable: **31%**

Q.3: In the past year, how often have you helped out at your child's school?



▲ 6 from last survey

Favorable: **24%**

Q.4: In the past year, how often have you attended an event or meeting at your child's school?



▼ 21 from last survey

Favorable: **49%**

Family Engagement Ideas for 2021-2022 Academic School Year

Provide [**Web Based Workshop**](#) of some sort for parents. Right now it's a difficult time for families and they need to feel supported. This can give an opportunity for families to network with one another. They can share what is working and what is not working. It can be focused on empowering them to feel good about themselves.

Host Mindfulness nights. We know that people in general are stressed to the max. This often transfers onto their children. Now add the remnants of the pandemic on top of everything they face on a daily basis and this causes extra weight and worry. We know that when we take time to address our mental health we have increased productivity, work-life balance, and most importantly a reduction in stress. Mindfulness helps us feel more present and gives us the ability to become more self aware. We can give this gift not only to our students but also their parents. I will be working on collaborating with Ms.Shannon on hosting this as an option for a Family Engagement Night.



Family Engagement Ideas Continued:

Yoga Night! Along with mindfulness yoga is also a helpful tool in decreasing stress and learning positive and helpful coping strategies. My thought is possibly a staff member could lead a yoga night or even possibly a parent.



Art Night For Parents! I know many of you have seen wine and paint nights. I was thinking of the possibility of hosting a therapy painting session. This could be done through zoom, in a group, or even classroom based. We have lots of artists here at SouthSide and I am sure we could come up with new and innovative ways to host this.



Family Engagement Ideas Continued:

School Newspaper! We did try to implement this last year. I had the thought what if the Fifth Grade Class was the grade responsible for writing the articles, editing the articles, and learning how to post them to the website as well as making a printable copy. It could display grade level achievements, keep parents informed about important dates, current events, community engagement activities, resources, and pictures.



We must be committed to think out of the box and find new and innovative ways to engage our students, staff, and families. We need to make the entire educational experience a positive one for all. I would now like everyone to take a quick minute and jot down an idea or two for a Family Engagement night. I can share out some of these ideas and we can then revisit them as the year gets started.

School Climate

Your average

91%

64 responses

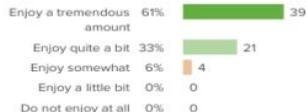
Change

▲ 3

since last survey

How did people respond?

Q.1: To what extent do you think that children enjoy going to your child's school?



▲ 5 from last survey Favorable: **94%**

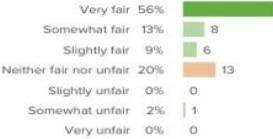
State Grouping average: **74%** Urban Core
 School Type average: **71%** All Schools
 School Type average: **80%** Elementary Schools
 District average: **91%** SouthSide Charter School
 State average: **71%** Rhode Island

Q.2: How motivating are the classroom lessons at your child's school?



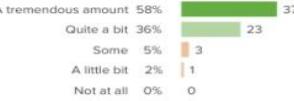
▲ 8 from last survey Favorable: **89%**

Q.3: How fair or unfair is the school's system of evaluating children?



▼ 1 from last survey Favorable: **78%**

Q.4: How much does the school value the diversity of children's backgrounds?



▲ 3 from last survey Favorable: **94%**

Q.5: How well do administrators at your child's school create a school environment that helps children learn?



▼ 2 from last survey Favorable: **89%**

Q.6: Overall, how much respect do you think the children at your child's school have for the staff?



▲ 6 from last survey Favorable: **97%**

Q.7: Overall, how much respect do you think the teachers at your child's school have for the children?



▲ 4 from last survey Favorable: **97%**

School Safety

Your average
90%

Change
 2
since last survey

How did people respond?

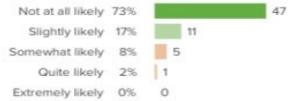
Q.1: How often do you worry about violence at your child's school?



0 from last survey

Favorable: **77%**

Q.3: How likely is it that someone from your child's school will bully him/her online?



5 from last survey

Favorable: **91%**

Q.5: To what extent are drugs a problem at your child's school?



0 from last survey

Favorable: **100%**

State Grouping average: **75%** Urban Core
School Type average: **78%** All Schools
School Type average: **85%** Elementary Schools
District average: **90%** SouthSide Charter School
State average: **78%** Rhode Island

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Your average

80%

64 responses

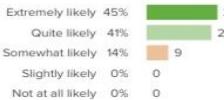
Change

4

since last survey

How did people respond?

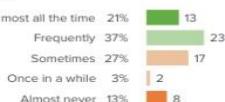
Q.1: If your child fails to reach an important goal, how likely is she/he to try again?



5 from last survey

Favorable: **86%**

Q.2: How often does your child remain calm, even if someone is bothering her/him or saying something bad?



24 from last survey

Favorable: **57%**

Q.3: How often is your child prepared for class?



6 from last survey

Favorable: **89%**

Q.4: How much respect do students at your child's school show each other?



10 from last survey

Favorable: **90%**

Closing:

Family engagement is about seeing families as an intricate part of their child's education and treating them as partners and experts in their child's learning and wellbeing. Years of research show that engaging families goes far beyond raising test scores; it is about preparing children and families for success in life. I thank you for your attention and participation today while I was presenting. I look forward to your continued support at making our families feel welcomed, supported, and valued.