

Preparing to Engage Families

Content adapted from the [*Family Engagement Toolkit: Continuous Improvement through an Equity Lens*](#)

Defining Family

- Any adult who serves a parental role in children's lives, such as birth and adoptive parents, foster parents, grandparents, etc.
- Can also include adults who might not have a guardian role but are close to children, such as a pastor or youth group counselor

Defining Family Engagement

- An intentional and systemic partnership of educators, families, and community members who share responsibility for a student's preparation for school, work and life, from the time the child is born to young adulthood

Two Critical Dimensions of Family Engagement

- *Trusting* relationships between educators and families. This occurs when:
 - Educators are culturally responsive and reach out to families to build partnerships
 - All families feel welcome and respected at their child's school
 - Educators and family leaders jointly plan and lead family engagement activities
- *Connecting* family engagement activities and efforts to student learning. This occurs when:
 - Families and educators engage in two-way communication about what students are learning at school
 - Family engagement activities help families to provide support at home for learning

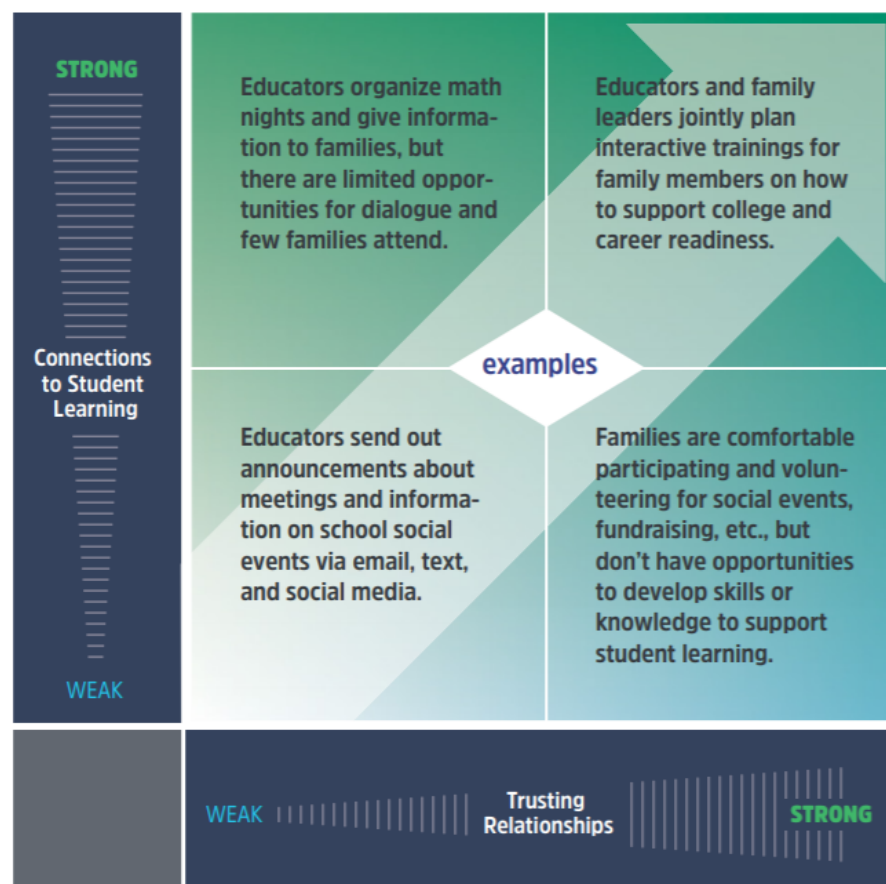
The To&Through MIDDLE GRADES NETWORK

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Four Types of Schools

- Fortress Schools
 - The message is “we don’t want you here”
- Come-if-we-call Schools
 - The message is “we’ll take care of your students and don’t bother us unless we call you”
- Open-door Schools
 - There may be a welcoming message, but the underlying attitude is that “we know what is best for your child.”
- Partner Schools
 - Explicitly welcomes families to share responsibility for the learning and success of the students.

FIGURE 1: Family Engagement Matrix



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Tips and Guiding Equity Questions to Consider

- Have we identified prospective parent leaders who are representative of our diverse families? Have we considered all forms of diversity, such as socio-economic, racial/ethnic, cultural, linguistic, gender identity, and family definition (e.g., foster families)?
- Have we sought out family leaders who can bring the perspective of families that have historically been underrepresented?
- Are we scheduling meetings at a time that is convenient and realistic?
- Do we need to provide transportation, childcare, or translation/interpreting services?

Ways to Engage Parents

1. Parent Survey (see sample questions)
2. Parent Focus Groups (adapt from Student Focus Group Guide)
3. Empathy Interviews

LANGUAGE IN THIS GUIDE WAS ADAPTED FROM:

California Department of Education. (2017). *Family Engagement Toolkit: Continuous Improvement Through an Equity Lens*.
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/documents/family-engagement.pdf>

Henderson, A. T., Mapp, K. L., Johnson, V. R., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family-school partnerships*. The New Press.