



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

August 1, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

On May 5, 2016, U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services (Departments) issued a policy statement that sets a vision and provides recommendations to States, local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and public and private child care and Head Start early childhood programs, for implementing effective family engagement policies and practices to improve outcomes for children from birth through third grade. It is the position of the Departments that strong family engagement in early learning systems is central – not supplemental – to promoting children’s healthy intellectual, physical, and social-emotional development; preparing children for success in school; and supporting academic achievement in elementary school and beyond.

Research indicates that families’ involvement in children’s learning and development impacts lifelong health, developmental, and academic outcomes. Family engagement in early learning programs and elementary school supports families as they teach, nurture, and advocate for their children. In turn, family engagement supports and improves the early learning programs in which children are cared for and taught. When families and educators/providers work together and support each other in their respective roles, children do better.

Through the policy statement, the Departments aim to support and encourage States, LEAs, schools, and public and private child care and Head Start early childhood programs to take action to develop and implement effective family engagement policies and practices.

Together we can make progress in recognizing and supporting family engagement as a key strategy in improving early learning programs and outcomes for all children, particularly our most vulnerable children. We hope that States and local communities will share the Departments’ vision that as children’s first and most important teachers, advocates and nurturers, families are essential partners in the work we do to ensure positive outcomes for all children. Thank you for what you do on behalf of children and families across America.

Sincerely,

/s/

John King, Jr., Secretary
U.S. Department of Education

/s/

Sylvia Matthews Burwell, Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services