

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the family and community engagement framework?

The purpose of the framework is to establish a U.S. Department of Education (ED) wide strategy of family and community engagement (FCE) efforts by collaborating FCE resources across ED, increase awareness about FCE, and highlight the importance of parents working as partners with schools to achieve academic success.

What does the framework mean in the context of ED work?

The Framework may be used as a guide to help guide and inform conversations about family and community engagement programs at the State and local levels.

What does the FCE framework offer to the field?

The framework sets forth some of the components that may be important in creating and sustaining effective family and community engagement strategies. The goal is to help link family and community engagement to learning and education for children and schools. It provides a helpful way to focus, design, implement, and evaluate effective practices. It also offers examples of ways in which SEAs and LEAs can develop effective educational partnerships between home and school that go beyond “random acts of family engagement” that are disconnected from desired learning and educational outcomes for children and schools.

What are the key components of the Framework for building Family-School Partnerships?

The key components are:

The Challenge

Opportunity Conditions

Policy and Program Goals, and

Family and Staff Partnership Outcomes

What is meant by The Challenge?

The Challenge is designed to give staff and families the opportunities to help build their *capacity* to engage in partnerships.

What is meant by the Opportunity Conditions?

After The Challenge is discovered, a way should be found to change the status of that Challenge. There are two ways in which this can be done-- process and organizational.

What are process conditions?

Research suggests that there are certain *process* conditions that should be met in order for participants to come away from a learning experience with not only new knowledge but with the ability to and an interest in applying what they have learned. The process conditions are a series of actions, operations, and procedures that are likely to be important to the success of capacity building opportunities. They include:

- *Linked to Learning* – initiatives should be aligned with school and district achievement goals and connect families to the teaching and learning goals for the students.
- *Relational* – a major focus of the initiative should be on building respectful and trusting relationships between home and school.

- *Developmental* – the initiatives should focus on building the intellectual, social, and human capital of stakeholders engaged in the program.
- *Collective/Collaborative* – learning should be conducted in group rather than individual settings and should be focused on building networks and learning communities.
- *Interactive* – participants should be given opportunities to test out and apply new skills.

What are the organizational conditions?

Research suggests that the following organizational conditions are likely to be important in order to sustain and scale up opportunity efforts across districts and schools:

- *Systemic* – should be purposefully designed as a core component of educational goals such as school readiness, student achievement, and school turnaround.
- *Integrated* – should be embedded into structures and processes such as training and professional development, teaching and learning, curriculum, and community collaboration.
- *Sustained* – should operate with adequate resources and infrastructure support.

What are the goals of Policy and Program?

The goals of policy and program should be directed at improving family engagement efforts and should include a dual focus on building the capacity of staff and families to engage in productive partnerships.

What are some of important elements of capacity?

Here are examples of four key components of capacity—the “4-C’s”- that be helpful in developing the building blocks for active participation in home-school partnerships:

- *Capabilities*, one’s human capital, skills and knowledge;
- *Connections*, the important relationships, networks, in other words, a person’s social capital;
- *Confidence*, one’s individual level of self-efficacy; and
- *Cognition*, a person’s assumptions, beliefs and worldview.

What are some of the meaningful outcomes of staff and family partnership?

Once staff and families have built appropriate capabilities, connections, confidence, and cognition, they should be able to engage in partnerships that will support student achievement and student learning. Staff prepared to engage in partnerships with families can, for example:

- Honor and recognize families’ existing knowledge, skill, and forms of engagement.
- Create and sustain school and district cultures that welcome, invite and promote family engagement.
- Develop and connect all family engagement initiatives to student learning and development.

Families, regardless of their race/ethnicity, educational background, gender, disability or socioeconomic status, should be prepared to engage in productive partnerships with school and districts to engage in such diverse roles such as:

- *Supporters* of their children’s learning and development
- *Encouragers* of an achievement identity, a positive self image, and a “can do” spirit in their children
- *Monitors* of their children’s time, behavior, boundaries and resources
- *Models* of lifelong learning and enthusiasm for education
- *Advocates/Activists* for improved learning opportunities for their children and at their schools
- *Decision-makers/choosers* of educational options for their children, the school, and community
- *Collaborators* with school staff and members of the community on issues of school improvement and reform

As a result of this enhanced capacity on the part of district and school staff and families, districts and schools should be able to cultivate and sustain at scale active, respectful, and effective partnerships with families that are linked to learning and support children’s learning and development and school improvement.

What are examples of effective promising practices that are connected to family engagement?

Examples of potentially promising practices may exist across states, examples include:

- The Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project out of Sacramento, California;
- The Academic Parent Teacher Team (APPT) program from Creighton, Arizona;
- Community – Advocacy – Resources – and Equity (CARE) in Jessamine County, Kentucky;
- The Maryland Parent Involvement Matters Award (PIMA) program;
- Parent University in Boston, Massachusetts;
- Project EAGLE, Kansas City, Kansas;
- Math and Parent Partners (MAPPS);
- Families and Schools Together (FAST).

There may be many more and we welcome input on these and other possible examples of promising practices.

How will ED support SEAs and LEAs in their FCE efforts?

ED is planning to provide SEAs and LEAs support through technical assistance and outreach. ED is compiling a compendium of FCE resources from across the Department that will be available for use by SEAs and LEAs. For example there are Comprehensive Centers across the country, Parent Training Information Centers, ED staff from across the Department and regional service team members who will be available to help provide technical assistance.

Are there additional funds associated with the FCE framework?

No; however there are a number of ways that SEAs and LEAs may choose to explore the use of available funds on hand under programs such as 21st Century Community Learning programs, Safe and Healthy Schools, Special Education, Title I and Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act , and others. Some SEAs and LEAs may also choose to leverage funds

by partnering with faith-based organizations (FBOs), community based organizations (CBOs) and other private organizations.

Are there general strategies for how LEAs, CBOs, FBOs, and other entities can work together to carry out Family and Community Engagement to improve student success?

LEAs may involve community partners early in the process to analyze data and share ideas on ways to achieve student success (e.g., offering opportunities for mentoring, tutoring, and/or internship programs).

What implications will the FCE framework have on monitoring?

Monitoring will vary across states and programs based on program specific statutory requirements. For example: the FCE framework may be used to be part of the discussion in outcomes-based monitoring to help encourage effective family and staff partnerships.