



family and community engagement

Is Your School Using High-Impact¹ Practices to Engage Families?

A checklist for self-assessment

1. Creating a Family-Friendly School.

Review the statements under this goal and check off the high-impact practices that your school is using:

- **The school environment feels welcoming and inclusive to all families.**
 - Friendly signs in different languages
 - The school has standards of welcoming behavior that apply to all staff
 - There is a designated family/parent resource room in the school
- **Staff develops respectful, trusting relationships with families.**
 - Teachers or counselors make regular personal contact with families
 - There is a parent liaison who helps teachers connect to families
 - A “joining process” welcomes new families to the school
 - Staff partners closely with families whose children are struggling
 - Staff makes home visits
- **Staff is open and accessible.**
 - Families say it is easy to talk with the principal, teachers and counselors
 - Families feel free to bring up issues, questions and concerns
 - Teachers and families have frequent opportunities to meet face to face and get to know each other
 - Parents are invited to drop off their kids in the classroom
 - Principal greets families before and after school.

Now, for each statement, indicate where you think you are at this point:

Got it covered!

On our way

Just getting started

Thinking about it...

2. Communicating Effectively

Review the statements under this goal and check off the high-impact practices that your school is using:

- **Our school communicates with families in a wide variety of ways.**
 - It has a healthy balance of high-touch, face-to-face interaction with high-tech access via websites, social media, and text messaging
 - It devises strategies to reach parents from different backgrounds
 - It partners with community organizations to get the word out to diverse communities served.
- **Our school address barriers to communication**
 - It avoids negative messaging and focuses on strengths and assets
 - It offers interpreters and simultaneous interpretation for meetings and activities
 - It translates major documents
 - It creates clear procedures for staff on helping all visitors
 - It offers workshops for families on using technology
- **Families of all backgrounds can communicate candidly and effectively with school staff**
 - The school conducts surveys and focus groups with families about their concerns and ideas
 - It uses two-way communication vehicles such as text-messaging systems
 - The principal has open door hours
 - The principal holds family chats on topics of interest to families.

¹ *High-Impact: research suggests that the practice has a significant impact on student outcomes.

Now, for each statement, indicate where you think you are at this point:

Got it covered!	On our way	Just getting started	Thinking about it...
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3. Creating Links to Student Learning

Review the statements under this goal and check off the high-impact practices that your school is using:

- **Staff makes sure all families are informed about what their kids are learning and doing in class.**
 - Student work is posted in hallways and public places
 - Families can observe in the classroom
 - Workshops are offered on what children are learning and how they are being taught
- **Our school's communications cover student progress.**
 - Website and newsletters feature approaches teachers are using to help all students reach learning goals
 - "State of the school" report describes how the school is working to improve student learning
 - Teachers provide parents with tips and resources to help students learn
- **Staff uses student achievement data to design events and programs.**
 - Activities for families focus on skills students need to strengthen
 - Teachers use data in class meetings with families to get their ideas about improving skills
 - School shares curriculum and student progress data with afterschool learning programs

Now, for each statement, indicate where you think you are at this point:

Got it covered!	On our way	Just getting started	Thinking about it...
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4. Supporting Families to Advocate for their Children

Review the statements under this goal and check off the high-impact practices that your school is using:

- **Our school helps families understand how the school and the school system works.**
 - It has a user-friendly website that explains school programs, policies, and practices
 - It provides workshops for immigrant families to help them navigate the school system and learn about their rights and responsibilities
 - It orients families to participate effectively in the special education process
- **Our school develops the capacity of families and students to be effective advocates and problem-solvers.**
 - It has written clear procedures in lay-not legal-language for resolving complaints and problems
 - It offers workshops on advocacy and problem-solving skills
 - It holds student-led conferences
 - It connects families of children with special needs to the parent resource center and other resources
- **School staff helps students and families plan for their children's future**
 - Discusses goals for children and develop personal learning plans or individual graduation plans
 - Engages families in career exploration activities
 - Collaborates with community groups to offer tours of local colleges, work-study and internship programs.

Now, for each statement, indicate where you think you are at this point:

Got it covered!	On our way	Just getting started	Thinking about it...
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5. Capturing Parents' Voices

Review the statements under this goal and check off the high-impact practices that your school is using:

- Our school consults parents about decisions that affect their children**
 - School management team reflects diversity of community
 - School staff asks families for their ideas for improving the school, using culturally responsive strategies to reach diverse parent voices
- Our school encourages the development of diverse parent leaders**
 - It mentors and coaches emerging parent leaders
 - It refers parents to leadership development classes or programs such as *Parent Leadership Facilitation (PLF)* training
 - It offers leadership opportunities like committees, action research teams, advisory panels, and task forces on special issues
 - It invites parents to share their knowledge and skills at faculty meetings, class meetings, and open houses.
- Our school works to ensure that the PTA represents the diversity of its school's families**
 - It creates special events for underrepresented families to encourage their participation
 - It supports existing leaders to recruit new leaders from a different community than their own
 - It holds community conversations on topics of interest to families

Now, for each statement, indicate where you think you are at this point:

Got it covered!	On our way	Just getting started	Thinking about it...
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6. Collaborating with Community

Review the statements under this goal and check off the high-impact practices that your school is using:

- Our school identifies community resources to broaden opportunities for student learning, development and growth.**
 - Action research team of staff, families, students and community members explore community and map local resources
 - Staff helps families connect to social services
 - Staff and parents lead community walk for new teachers and other school staff.
- Afterschool, human services, libraries and community learning programs support our school.**
 - School staff member reaches out to community groups to sponsor programs, offer tutoring and homework help, mentor students and families
 - School offers space to local programs to provide family services and learning opportunities after school hours.
- Our school collaborates with local businesses to support students and families.**
 - Staff reach out to businesses to offer internships, work-study, scholarships and part-time jobs to students

Now, for each statement, indicate where you think you are at this point:

Got it covered!	On our way	Just getting started	Thinking about it...
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7. Bridging Differences of Race, Class and Culture

Review the statements under this goal and check off the high-impact practices that your school is using:

- **Our school promotes an understanding of different cultures.**
 - It recognizes and discusses the school's diversity openly and appreciatively
 - It incorporate information about families' cultures into curriculum and materials
 - It recognize families' contributions and funds of knowledge.
 - It holds events that honor all cultures in the school
- **Our school recognizes and addresses class and language differences.**
 - The PTA officers reflect our school's diversity
 - Parents of all backgrounds are engaged in planning school activities and events
 - Financial barriers to participation are anticipated and overcome
 - Interpreters are available for meetings and events.
 - English-speaking staff and families make efforts to mix with families of other languages and cultures.
- **Our school explores and confronts negative attitudes and expectations for students of color and low income.**
 - Professional development provides insight on unconscious bias and practices that produce inequity
 - Staff and families co-develop standards for equitable practice and high expectations
 - Staff makes an effort to pronounce students' names correctly
 - Staff uses "teachable moments" and news stories to discuss racially motivated incidents.

Now, for each statement, indicate where you think you are at this point:

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Reflect on your results:

Which areas are you doing well in? Which ones need more work?

Where do school staff and families agree? Where do they differ?

What steps could you take to make your family engagement school activities more high impact?

Right Away?

Over the long term?
