

Fostering Family Engagement in School



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It can be challenging for educators and school staff to positively engage parents in the school culture and educational process. [In this webinar](#), presenters from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing discuss how schools can overcome barriers to engaging families.

Learning Outcomes

- » Explain the importance of family engagement in school.
- » Describe common barriers to family engagement in school activities.
- » Apply strategies to address barriers and increase family engagement.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ The way to achieve family engagement is to facilitate systematic collaboration between the school and families. This means employing intentional strategies that are sustained over time and that are aligned with the learning and developmental needs of children.
- ✓ Positive effects of engagement include improved test scores for students, increased job satisfaction of staff, and improved feelings of confidence and support for families.
- ✓ The Continuum of Engagement describes different ways that schools often engage with families, including the **Fortress School** (where families are discouraged from participating), the **“Come if We Call” School** (where families’ ability to contribute at school is limited), the **Open Door School** (where families are given multiple opportunities to come into the school community), and the **Partnership School** (where working closely with families to ensure student success is a key value).
- ✓ To shift your school’s view, understand that families do well if (1) they **trust** the school, (2) they have the **capacity** to engage, and (3) they have the **skills** to engage. Before any of these conditions can be met, educators and staff must have the resources they need.
- ✓ There are a variety of strategies that you can use to address family trust, capacity, and skills. These include getting to know families, ensuring physical and emotional safety, accommodating diverse work schedules, using plain language, and providing information ahead of important meetings and conversations.
- ✓ Section 5 of the [Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools Toolkit](#) outlines strategies for including and supporting parents, families, and communities in student-centered planning.

Additional Resources

[What Parents and Caregivers Can Ask and Do to Help Children Thrive at School](#) - A checklist from the U.S. Department of Education to guide family engagement.

[Strategies for Collaboration](#) - A resource from the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments to help school staff collaborate in a trauma-sensitive manner with students and families.

Questions for Discussion

- » Where does your school fall on the Continuum of Engagement right now? Where do you want it to be?
- » What resources do educators and staff need to engage families? How can school leaders provide these resources?
- » How do families feel about their relationship with the school? How can you find out?

[NC2S.org](https://nc2s.org) | schoolsafety@umich.edu | 734-647-8295
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This project was supported by Cooperative Agreement No 2019 YS BX K 001 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.