

REL Southwest Ask A REL Response

Educator Effectiveness

June 2019

Question:

What family engagement strategies have proven successful in other districts and what information is required for successfully implementing these strategies?

Response:

Thank you for the question you submitted to our REL Reference Desk. We have prepared the following memo with research references to help answer your question. For each reference, we provide an abstract, excerpt, or summary written by the study's author or publisher. Following an established Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest research protocol, we conducted a search for methods for systematic collection of data on successful family engagement strategies and implementation strategies.

We have not evaluated the quality of references and the resources provided in this response. We offer them only for your reference. Also, we searched the references in the response from the most commonly used resources of research, but they are not comprehensive, and other relevant references and resources may exist. References provided are listed in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance. We do not include sources that are not freely available to the requestor.

Research References

Auerbach, S. (2009). Walking the walk: Portraits in leadership for family engagement in urban schools. *School Community Journal*, 19(1), 9–32. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ847415>

From the ERIC abstract: “Family and community engagement are increasingly seen as powerful tools for making schools more equitable, culturally responsive, and collaborative. The commitment of school leaders is vital to school-community connections, yet is poorly documented in the literature and insufficiently addressed in training for administrators. Many school leaders ‘talk the talk’ of school-family partnerships, but how exactly do they ‘walk the walk,’ given the competing pressures they face in a massive urban district like Los Angeles? This qualitative study offers contextualized portraits of four school leaders notable for their proactive, community-oriented approach. Data focus on the administrators’ role in promoting activities, including an annual conference with elected officials, the Parents as Authors Program,

community organizing-style ‘house meetings’ in classrooms, and home visits. Findings suggest these leaders actively pursued family engagement as part of a broader moral commitment to social justice and educational equity for disenfranchised Latino families. Inspired by various family engagement models but distrustful of traditional parent involvement structures in the district, they shaped activities to the needs of their particular communities. Implications for leadership preparation programs are discussed, such as the need for more hands-on experience working with parents and apprenticeships with community-oriented school leaders.”

Chavkin, N. F. (2005). Strategies for preparing educators to enhance the involvement of diverse families in their children’s education. *Multicultural Education*, 13(2), 16–20.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ759617>

From the ERIC abstract: “Educators want and need specific preparation about the knowledge, attitudes, and skills it takes to enhance the involvement of diverse families in their children’s education. The importance of preparing educators to work together with diverse families cannot be overstated. A parent is a child’s first teacher and the only teacher who remains with a child throughout his or her education. Universities have a tremendous potential to improve the academic achievement and social emotional learning of all students by preparing future educators to work with diverse families. However, most universities are just beginning to prepare educators to work with diverse children and families. This article describes promising theoretical models, discusses successful approaches, considers key issues, and offers recommendations for preparing educators to work with diverse families.”

Garbacz, S. A., Hirano, K., McIntosh, K., Eagle, J. W., Minch, D., & Vatland, C. (2018). Family engagement in schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports: Barriers and facilitators to implementation. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 33(3), 448–459.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1191875>

From the ERIC abstract: “The purpose of this study was to identify barriers and facilitators to family engagement in schools implementing schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). Participants consisted of 1 representative member each from 204 school PBIS teams across 3 states. Qualitative analysis guided examination of responses to 1 question regarding barriers and 2 questions about facilitators to family engagement. Survey respondents identified key barriers to family engagement as a lack of resources, inconsistent communication, and reluctance of families and school staff to partner. Specified facilitators included communication, PBIS, shared decision-making, and strategies to build relationships with families.”

Garcia, M. E., Frunzi, K., Dean, C. B., Flores, N., & Miller, K. B. (2016). *Toolkit of resources for engaging families and the community as partners in education. Part 1: Building an understanding of family and community engagement* (REL 2016-148). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED569110>

From the ERIC abstract: “The Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education is a four-part resource that brings together research, promising practices, and useful tools and resources to guide educators in strengthening partnerships with families and community members to support student learning. The toolkit defines family and community engagement as an overarching approach to support family well-being, strong parent-child relationships, and students’ ongoing learning and development. The primary audiences for this toolkit are administrators, teachers, teacher leaders, and trainers in diverse schools and districts. Part I is designed to guide educators into building awareness of how their beliefs and assumptions about family and community engagement influence their interactions with families and the community and how knowledge about the demographic characteristics of the families in their schools can inform educators about what might support or hinder family engagement with schools.”

Garcia, M. E., Frunzi, K., Dean, C. B., Flores, N., & Miller, K. B. (2016). *Toolkit of resources for engaging families and the community as partners in education: Part 2: Building a cultural bridge* (REL 2016-151). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED569111>

From the ERIC abstract: “The Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education is a four-part resource that brings together research, promising practices, and useful tools and resources to guide educators in strengthening partnerships with families and community members to support student learning. The toolkit defines family and community engagement as an overarching approach to support family well-being, strong parent-child relationships, and students’ ongoing learning and development. The primary audiences for this toolkit are administrators, teachers, teacher leaders, and trainers in diverse schools and districts. Part 2 is designed to tap into the strengths of families and community members and help families establish active roles in the school community in support of student learning.”

Garcia, M. E., Frunzi, K., Dean, C. B., Flores, N., & Miller, K. B. (2016). *Toolkit of resources for engaging families and the community as partners in education: Part 3: Building trusting relationships with families and the community through effective communication* (REL 2016-152). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED569112>

From the ERIC abstract: “The Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education is a four-part resource that brings together research, promising practices, and useful tools and resources to guide educators in strengthening partnerships with families and community members to support student learning. The toolkit defines family and community engagement as an overarching approach to support family well-being, strong parent--child relationships, and students’ ongoing learning and development. The primary audiences for this toolkit are administrators, teachers, teacher leaders, and trainers in diverse schools and districts. Part 3 is designed to show how

cross-cultural and two-way communication enhances family and community engagement.”

Garcia, M. E., Frunzi, K., Dean, C. B., Flores, N., & Miller, K. B. (2016). *Toolkit of resources for engaging families and the community as partners in education: Part 4: Engaging all in data conversations* (REL 2016-153). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED569113>

From the ERIC abstract: “The Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education is a four-part resource that brings together research, promising practices, and useful tools and resources to guide educators in strengthening partnerships with families and community members to support student learning. This toolkit defines family and community engagement as an overarching approach to support family well-being, strong parent-child relationships, and students’ ongoing learning and development. The primary audiences for this toolkit are administrators, teachers, teacher leaders, and trainers in diverse schools and districts. Part 4 is designed to help educators learn which student data are important to share with families and community members and how to share such data in a meaningful way.”

Hiatt-Michael, D. B. (2006). Reflections and directions on research related to family-community involvement in schooling. *School Community Journal*, 16(1), 7–30. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ794802>

From the ERIC abstract: “S. Redding noted the many challenges facing research and researchers in family-school-community involvement, and he presented a call to ‘rally the troops’ to respond to a series of concerns. The issue of control over defining the role of schools should be a shared enterprise among the family, the school, and the community, with the individual child as the center. This paper presents reflections on past developments providing the background and reasoning for contemporary practice of family-school involvement across America. The paper provides analyses of research and thought in order to present four recommendations for future directions in development and research for family-school-community involvement programs. The first two recommendations focus on ‘explicitly’ incorporating family-community involvement knowledge, skills, and values into preservice teacher and administrator licensing programs and studying the resulting effects on aspects of these programs. These recommendations are crucial to implementation of family and community involvement practices as the teacher and the principal serve as key agents for positive family and community involvement in schools. The third recommendation promotes studying the effects of family involvement in character/civic education on student outcomes. The fourth recommendation encourages research on the effects of tying community organizations, including health and social agencies, with the school. Each of these recommendations should serve to point out areas where family-school-community involvement research would be both timely and fruitful.”

Ilhan, F., Ozfidan, B., & Yilmaz, S. (2019). Home visit effectiveness on students' classroom behavior and academic achievement. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 10(1), 61–80. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1213224>

From the ERIC abstract: “Home visits have a large influence on the academic achievement of students and the relationship between teachers and students. The purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of home visits on students' academic success and behavior in the classroom. This study investigated the parent involvement of the students who were visited by teachers compared to students who were not visited by teachers. An explanatory mixed research method was used to determine the influence of the home visits on the academic achievement and classroom behavior of students compared to students whose homes were not visited. The first phase of the study was a survey instrument to measure the perspectives of teachers regarding the academic success and behavior of students. The second phase of the study included interviews with teachers to investigate their perceptions of the home visits. The total sample size of the study was 128 for the survey, and 10 of the 128 later participated in interviews. The results of the study indicate that home visits and family engagement have positive impacts on students' academic achievements and attitudes in school. The results of the study are applicable broadly in education and can assist teachers in improving the academic performance of their students.”

Mac Iver, M. A., Sheldon, S., Epstein, J., Rice, E., Mac Iver, D., & Simmons, A. (2018). Engaging families in the high school transition: Initial findings from a continuous improvement initiative. *School Community Journal*, 28(1), 37–66. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1184768>

From the ERIC abstract: “This case study focuses on one district's process of continuous improvement in family engagement. The improvement effort addresses the point at which family engagement tends to decline precipitously and students are particularly vulnerable--the transition into high school. In this article we analyze the implementation of a continuous improvement approach to engaging families as students make this critical transition. In particular, we describe (a) the variation in schools' family engagement activities and participation in cycles of inquiry, (b) the challenges identified by schools to implementing the family engagement approach and cycles of inquiry, and (c) the learning that occurred for both the participating schools and the district-university partnership team through the continuous improvement process.”

O'Donnell, J., & Kirkner, S. L. (2014). The impact of a collaborative family involvement program on Latino families and children's educational performance. *School Community Journal*, 24(1), 211–234. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1032271>

From the ERIC abstract: “Latino families highly value education and are committed to their children's educational success; however, Latino students often experience educational challenges. Well-designed family involvement programs can encourage Latino families, especially new immigrants or monolingual Spanish-speakers, to increase their involvement resulting in positive outcomes for children, families, and schools. This

two-year study examined the impact of the YMCA Family Involvement Project on levels of family involvement and children's educational performance using a sample of 144 low-income, urban, predominantly monolingual Spanish-speaking, Latino caregivers of 208 elementary-age children. Family workshops developed based on community input focused on in-home education strategies, parenting education, family literacy, and community leadership and advocacy. Teacher training on family involvement and school socials were also provided. Significant improvements were found in frequency of family-teacher contact, family involvement at school, and quality of the family-teacher relationship after program participation. Hierarchical regression analyses found higher levels of family participation predicted significantly better student social skills and work habits grades after one year of participation when controlling for baseline scores. At the end of two years, level of participation significantly predicted student effort, social skills and work habit grades, and standardized English Language Arts test scores and was somewhat predictive of achievement grades. Implications for practice are discussed."

O'Donnell, J., Kirkner, S. L., & Meyer-Adams, N. (2008). Low-income, urban consumers' perceptions of community school outreach practices, desired services, and outcomes. *School Community Journal*, 18(2), 147–164. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ818863>

From the ERIC abstract: "Community schools require the active involvement of family and community members in the education and schooling of children both in the home and on the school site. However, schools often have difficulty effectively bringing low-income, diverse parents onto school campuses even when they are involved in their children's education in the home. This study explores outreach methods, desired services, and benefits of participation from the perspective of 113 low-income, urban, predominantly Latino, community school consumers. A multi-pronged community outreach approach which emphasizes personal relationships is likely to be most effective. Consumers participated in diverse programs, but their first priorities were programs that would benefit their children's learning and their home environment. Consumers reported positive changes in their children, themselves, their collaboration with the school, and, to some extent, in their community as a result of their involvement. The findings suggest that the successful engagement of urban parents and community residents on school campuses requires diverse outreach strategies. A wide variety of learning opportunities should also prove beneficial to children, families, and schools. Implications for practice are discussed."

Sanders, M., Sheldon, S., & Epstein, J. (2005). Improving schools' partnership programs in the National Network of Partnership Schools. *Journal of Educational Research & Policy Studies*, 5(1), 24–47. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ846828>

From the ERIC abstract: "The current wave of educational reform includes an emphasis on family and community involvement as a strategy for school improvement. Yet, to effectively engage families and communities in the educational process, educators need assistance and support. In 1996, the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) was established to build the capacity of educators to work collaboratively with families and community members to develop comprehensive programs of school, family, and

community partnerships that focus on students' success. Using survey data collected from 603 schools that are members of NNPS, this paper examines whether particular structures, processes, and services positively influence schools' capacity to implement and maintain high quality partnership programs over time."

Shamash, E. R., & Martin, A. M. (2014). Family communication: Strategies for building effective partnerships and working relationships. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 2014(2), 107–121. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1134775>

From the ERIC abstract: "This article offers a variety of strategies for pre-service and beginning teachers to utilize in order to create positive and effective relationships with families that are built on clear communication and trust. It is crucial for new and veteran teachers to understand the importance of successful communication with parents and families of students with special needs. Teachers and educational professionals should implement ongoing strategies throughout the school year to ensure that parents and families are educated about the approaches and services their child receives in school. Familial knowledge and understanding of the types of services and the schedule of when those services are delivered can lead to increased family involvement in their child's special education program. This involvement can ultimately increase the learning process and progress towards meeting goals and objectives for students with disabilities (Dunst, 2002; Kashinath, Woods, & Goldstein, 2006, Wellner, 2012). This article will define the following strategies: creating 'master schedules,' writing a 'student at a glance,' setting up 'team meeting schedules' for the school year, creating 'team meeting and IEP meeting agendas,' as well as explain the most effective use of 'communication sheets.' These types of user-friendly approaches to establishing ongoing and consistent contact with families is necessary for family satisfaction and student success, especially for families of students with disabilities at all age levels (Bezdek, Summers, & Turnbull, 2010; Diliberto & Brewer, 2012)."

Smith, J., Wohlstetter, P., Kuzin, C. A., & De Pedro, K. (2011). Parent involvement in urban charter schools: New strategies for increasing participation. *School Community Journal*, 21(1), 71–94. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ932201>

From the ERIC abstract: "Decades of research point to the benefits of parent involvement in education. However, research has also shown that White, middle-class parents are disproportionately involved. Charter schools, as schools of choice, have been assumed to have fewer involvement barriers for minority and low-income parents, but a 2007 survey of charter leaders found that parent involvement remains a significant challenge. This qualitative study utilizes Epstein's model of family involvement to examine parent involvement programs at twelve charter schools across six U.S. states. Findings suggest that parent involvement 'activities' in the study sample of urban charter schools fit Epstein's typology fairly well. However, the 'strategies' used to implement these activities and to attract hard-to-reach parents are fairly innovative: Study schools offered wrap-around services, incentives, and contracts to enhance and ensure participation; utilized technology for advertising parent volunteer opportunities; and involved parents in the decision-making and governance of the school. Overall, these

strategies were linked with increasing parents' self-efficacy and comfort level in participating in their children's education.”

Stefanski, A., Valli, L., & Jacobson, R. (2016). Beyond involvement and engagement: The role of the family in school-community partnerships. *School Community Journal*, 26(2), 135–160. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1124001>

From the ERIC abstract: “Research indicates that partnerships between schools and neighborhood communities support student learning, improve schools, and strengthen families and neighborhoods. These partnerships expand the traditional educational mission of the school to include health and social services for children and their families and to involve the broader community. School-community partnerships typically arise out of a specific need in the community and, as such, differ across a range of processes, structures, purposes, and types of family involvement. In previous work, we developed a typology to more closely examine various school-community partnerships (Valli, Stefanski, & Jacobson, 2013). From that review of the literature, we identified four increasingly complex and comprehensive partnership models. In this article, we reexamine the literature, focusing on the role of the family in those partnership models, and discuss implications for productive family-school-community relations. Our analysis of the literature indicates that the role of parents and families differed considerably across the four models. In contrast to the simple family ‘involvement’ versus family ‘engagement’ dichotomy found in much of the current literature, we found eight distinct ways in which family roles were envisioned and enacted. This article provides a detailed picture of those roles to guide policies and practices that strengthen the family’s role in school-community partnerships.”

Additional Organizations to Consult

Global Family Research Project (GlobalFRP) – <https://globalfrp.org/>

From the website: “We promote equitable family and community engagement in an ecology of learning that connects the home, school, and community.

Our Work:

- Supports systemic approaches to family and community engagement
- Produces top-notch research
- Provides current news and resources to policymakers and practitioners
- Builds the capacity of organizations to engage families
- Designs professional learning opportunities, such as interactive cases, design thinking sessions, and communities of practice
- Delivers actionable guidance and tools for evidence-based approaches”

REL Southwest note: GlobalFRP provides several resources on its website, including the following:

- “5 Benefits of Human-Centered Design Thinking for Family Engagement” research publication, available at <https://globalfrp.org/Articles/5-Benefits-of-Human-Centered-Design-Thinking-for-Family-Engagement>.
- “How Coaching Boosts Family Engagement” policy brief, available at <https://globalfrp.org/Articles/How-Coaching-Boosts-Family-Engagement>.

Youth.gov – <https://youth.gov/>

From the website: “youth.gov is the U.S. government website that helps you create, maintain, and strengthen effective youth programs. Included are youth facts, funding information, and tools to help you assess community assets, generate maps of local and federal resources, search for evidence-based youth programs, and keep up-to-date on the latest, youth-related news.”

REL Southwest note: Youth.gov provides several resources under the “Family and Community Engagement” topic on its website, including the following:

- “Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family–School Partnerships” by the U.S. Department of Education, available at <http://www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/partners-education.pdf>.
- “Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework” by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Head Start, available at <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/ohs-approach-to-school-readiness-pfce-framework.pdf>.
- “How to Develop a Logic Model for Districtwide Family Engagement Strategies,” available at <http://www.schoolturnaroundsupport.org/sites/default/files/resources/HowToDevelopALogicModel-District.pdf>.

U.S. Department of Education, Family and Community Engagement – <https://www.ed.gov/parent-and-family-engagement>

From the website: “Mission: Raising the next generation is a shared responsibility. When families, communities and schools work together, students are more successful and the entire community benefits. For schools and districts across the U.S., family engagement is becoming an integral part of education reform efforts. Family Engagement Team: The Family Engagement Team is an interoffice group dedicated to strengthening the voice of families, by bringing focus to the needs of students so as to allow every student to reach full potential. Learn more about the Team, its inception, and role and activities at the Department. Partners in Education: Check out the resources on this webpage supporting the framework for building greater support and capacity in schools, homes and communities, so ALL students have the chance to succeed. Get ideas for how to bring your passion, talents, and energy to help students and to make your neighborhood schools stronger. YOU can make a difference.”

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau, Administration for Children and Families: Family Engagement Inventory (FEI) – <https://www.childwelfare.gov/FEI/>

From the website: “Effective family engagement is recognized as a foundation for success across the human services and education fields. Child Welfare Information Gateway developed the Family Engagement Inventory (FEI), a cross-disciplinary collection of information, to assist professionals from several fields of practice learn how family engagement is defined and implemented. This interactive and practical tool can help professionals understand the differences and the commonalities about family engagement and improve collaboration and outcomes for families across child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, education, and early childhood education.”

REL Southwest note: FEI offers practice-level strategies on its website, including “methods, plans of action, processes, and/or policies designed to be used by frontline staff of each discipline in order to enhance or achieve family engagement,” available at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/FEI/practice-strategies/>.

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- [(“family engagement” OR “family involvement” OR “parent school relationship” OR “home visits” OR “family school relationship” OR “parent participation” OR “parent teacher cooperation”) AND strategies AND (successful OR implement OR implementation OR “program effectiveness” OR impact)]

Databases and Resources

We searched [ERIC](#) for relevant, peer-reviewed research references. ERIC is a free online library of more than 1.7 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Additionally, we searched the [What Works Clearinghouse](#).

Reference Search and Selection Criteria

When we were searching and reviewing resources, we considered the following criteria:

- *Date of the publication:* References and resources published from 2004 to present, were included in the search and review.
- *Search priorities of reference sources:* Search priority is given to study reports, briefs, and other documents that are published and/or reviewed by IES and other federal or federally funded organizations, academic databases, including ERIC, EBSCO databases, JSTOR database, PsychInfo, PsychArticle, and Google Scholar.

- *Methodology*: The following methodological priorities/considerations were given in the review and selection of the references: (a) study types—randomized control trials, quasi-experiments, correlational studies, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, mixed methods analyses, and so forth; (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected, and so forth), study duration, and so forth; and (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, and so forth.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by stakeholders in the Southwest Region (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest at AIR. This memorandum was prepared by REL Southwest under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-91990018C0002, administered by AIR. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.