

# MiFamily:

## Michigan's Family Engagement Framework

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## OVERVIEW

### Every Program and School Birth through High School and Beyond

Michigan's Family Engagement Framework was developed by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) Family Engagement Stakeholder's Committee, inclusive of MDE staff, program, school, and community leaders and in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE). The development of this guide was a collaborative effort to combine research and best practices to provide resources integrating family engagement into the school and program improvement process. This tool is for programs, school districts, and schools to use in developing and expanding home-school-program partnerships to support learning and healthy development.

Michigan's Family Engagement Framework Stakeholder's Committee constructed a shared definition stemming from MDE's "Top 10 in 10" strategic plan and stakeholder voice.

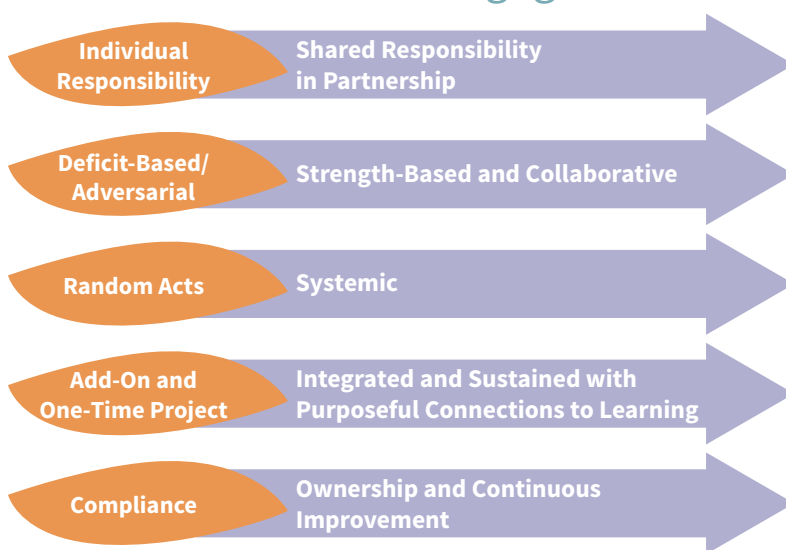
**Definition of Family Engagement: A collaborative relationship between families, educators, providers, and partners to support and improve the learning, development, and health of every learner.**

### Why Does Family Engagement Matter?

Family engagement is increasingly emerging as a primary predictor for children's academic success<sup>1</sup>. Family experiences are significant predictors of cognitive skills and social-emotional skills, such as motivation, attention, impulse control, and self-confidence<sup>2</sup>. Studies of family engagement in education reveal large associations between family engagement and success for students. Child outcomes improve considerably when schools and families collaborate on individual children's needs, goals, programs, and progress<sup>3</sup>. Effective family engagement improves classroom dynamics, increases teacher expectations, student-teacher relationships, and cultural competence<sup>4</sup>. Family engagement can be the key to improving school dropout rates and foster improved educational aspirations<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, family engagement impacts student achievement, regardless of race or culture<sup>6</sup>. Promoting family engagement through effective home to school collaborations supports the continuity of learning and outcomes for children and families. Quality, research-based family strategies:

- Build strong parent-school relationships, promoting positive outcomes for students<sup>7</sup>.
- Provide needed social and intellectual resources that have a positive impact on school improvement efforts<sup>8</sup>. Activities include participating in policy councils, or acting as a school liaison<sup>9</sup>.
- Recognize that all families, regardless of income, education, or cultural background, are involved in their child's learning and want their child to do well<sup>10</sup>.

### From Involvement to Engagement



### The Definition: A CLEAR CONSENSUS

The first step in supporting Michigan's learners and their families was to develop a consensus definition of family engagement for the state, inclusive of the MDE, local districts, and community partners. After researching several definitions from other statewide family engagement frameworks and research,

- Are strongly linked to higher levels of academic achievement, increased attendance, more positive attitudes toward school, and higher graduation rates<sup>11</sup>.
- Support high expectations for learners and helping them make real-world connections<sup>12</sup>.

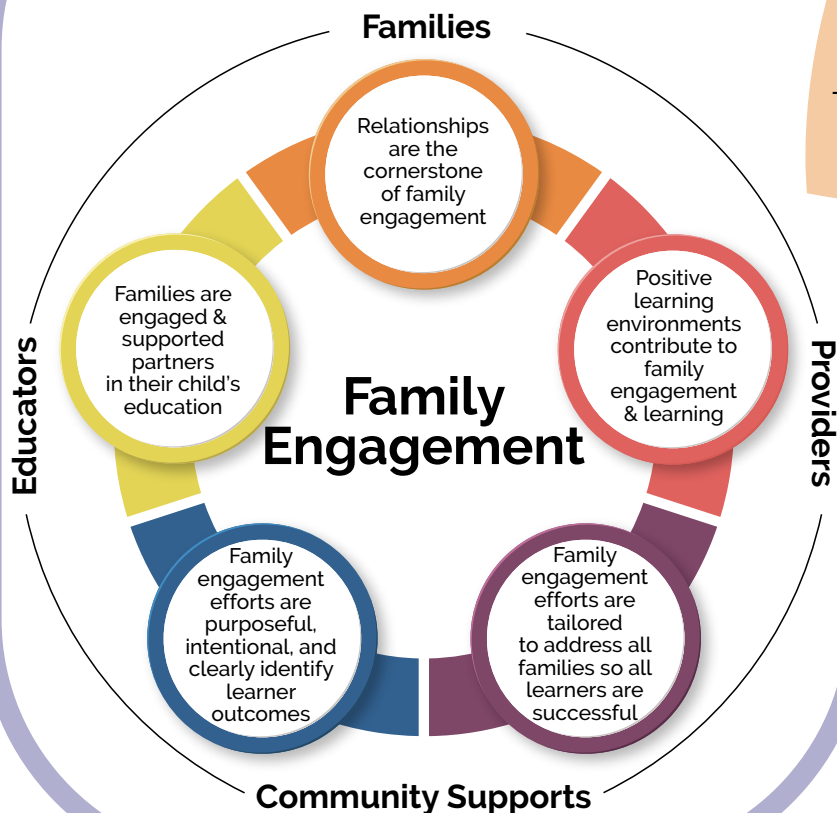
## GUIDING PRINCIPLES: How to Engage Families

Family engagement is a shared responsibility in which schools are committed to reach out to families in meaningful ways and families are committed to actively supporting their children. Authentic family engagement fosters personal relationships, respect, and mutual understanding with families. Authentic family engagement also includes sharing data with families about their learner, supporting home cultures, and aligning family engagement activities with program or school improvement goals. The MDE, in conjunction with the Family Engagement Stakeholder's Committee, conducted a deep analysis of research while garnering additional stakeholder voice, which led to five family engagement principles supporting MDE's definition of family engagement. The principles guide the development and inclusion of resources and strategies that research demonstrates most impact authentic family engagement.



### Family Engagement

Family engagement is a collaborative relationship between families, educators, providers, and partners to support and improve the learning, development, and health of every learner.



“ We need to change the preposition. We need to start doing “with” families, not “to” families. ”

— Northern Michigan School Administrator

## Michigan's Family Engagement Principles

### 1. Relationships are the cornerstone of family engagement.

- Adopt an evidence-based home visiting program
- Build bridges/cultural proficiency activities
- Plan positive communications with all families

### 2. Families are engaged and supported partners in their child's education.

- Include families on planning teams
- Use surveys throughout the year to capture family input and report out results
- Link families to community resources

### 3. Family engagement efforts are purposeful, intentional, and clearly identify learner outcomes.

- Lead academic parent-teacher teams
- Design family events with family input and use the events to teach families skills they can reinforce at home
- Conduct student-led conferences

### 4. Family engagement efforts are tailored to address all families so all learners are successful.

- Seek barriers and remove them
- Provide interpreters and offer communications in multiple languages
- Provide training to staff
- Offer childcare at events

### 5. Positive learning environments contribute to family engagement and learning.

- Involve families when creating security and visiting policies
- Ensure school personnel are visible in halls, at entries, at the buses, and at pickup
- Establish a community schools approach

## Building Capacity to Do the Work: Stakeholders' Roles and Actions

Family engagement is a shared responsibility in which programs and schools are committed to reach out to families in meaningful ways and families are equipped to actively support their children. This guide has been developed for educators and providers of programs and schools to support families to become the best partners in their child's education that they can be. Through the development of trusting relationships, two-way communication, and activities aligned with learner outcomes, family engagement efforts foster learning and development. This guide will support educators and providers of educational programs while additional family resources will support families. Authentic family engagement fosters building personal relationships, respect, and mutual understanding with families, sharing data with families about their learner, supporting home cultures, and aligning family engagement activities with program or school improvement goals.

An overwhelming and recurring theme found in focus groups with families across Michigan has been the concept, "nothing about us without us!" As family engagement activities and initiatives are planned, it is important that families partner with schools and programs in the planning process.

In the next section, **From Vision to Practice**, the MDE, utilizing a resource originated by the state of Connecticut and customized for Michigan, provides charts to guide the development of strong family engagement practices. The examples are divided into "Higher Impact," "Moderate Impact," and "Lower Impact," and can guide schools and families taking the approach toward incorporating a variety of strategies toward building robust and authentic family engagement.

“ It makes me feel important when I feel I can be a part of something that matters. ”

— Mecosta-Osceola  
Parent, January  
2018



## FROM VISION TO PRACTICE

Chart 1: What Does High-Impact Family Engagement Look Like in Early Childhood Programs?

Higher Impact on Child Learning and Development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
1. Families and early childhood providers do neighborhood walks to meet prospective families and hand out program information, books, and growth charts.	Springtime open house for new families, hosted by current families	Early childhood program registration on program website or drop in
2. Experienced families share family engagement strategies with new families in familiar neighborhood settings and sign them up for things like home visits, preschool, and community activities. Short videos of families' sharing are sent with texts or emails to families who couldn't attend, with sign-up sheets and surveys attached.	Programs host a family night where families visit classrooms, meet teachers, view children's work, sign-up to volunteer, and receive a family phone tree compiled by staff.	Offer back to school night where families visit classrooms, meet teachers, and have refreshments.
3. A program communication app creates two-way communication and ongoing exchange of knowledge between families and teachers.	Monthly phone calls, emails, or texts with information on program activities	Program newsletter with generic messaging
4. During classroom observations, teachers model strategies to support specific learning at home. Families ask questions and practice strategies with each other then go home with a "tip sheet." Short videos modeling the strategies are sent with emails or texts to families who couldn't attend, and a list of the families' questions and teachers' answers are attached along with the tip sheet.	At frequent meetings, staff share information regarding areas of child development with families and show how those areas are covered in the classroom.	Teachers send home written materials on developmental areas (e.g. social-emotional, motor, cognitive).
5. Home visits occur several times a year, so early childhood staff and families build relationships and share information to support smooth transitions to preschool or kindergarten.	Parent-teacher conferences occur twice a year, available evenings and on weekends.	Parent-teacher conferences occur by appointment during work days.
6. Host monthly family meetings, hosted by trained family members. Families take part in meaningful, guided conversations during which they support and learn from each other and collect input and feedback for the program.	Offer monthly breakfast gatherings for families and staff.	Families can visit the program site by appointment.
7. Families are engaged in Great Start Collaborative community event planning. Scheduled throughout the year, family members participate in planning and engaging in community and family activities and with children.	Families provide some feedback in the planning of community Great Start Collaborative activities.	Families participate in activities planned by the Great Start Collaboratives.

Chart 2: What Does High-Impact Family Engagement Look Like in Elementary Schools?

Higher Impact on Student Learning and Development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
<p>1. Back to School Night class meetings where families and teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Share learning strategies</li> <li>▪ Review key skills for students with home learning tips</li> <li>▪ Develop a communications plan</li> </ul>	<p>Open House</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Families tour school, chat with teachers</li> <li>▪ Classroom visits to meet teacher</li> <li>▪ Exhibits of student work</li> </ul>	<p>Back to School night in the auditorium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Panel of speakers</li> <li>▪ Pass out student handbooks</li> <li>▪ Hand out school calendar</li> </ul>
<p>2. Provide regular two-way calls/texts/emails to share progress and tips.</p>	<p>Positive personal phone calls home</p>	<p>Promote one-way communication such as texts, group emails, and messaging</p>
<p>3. Fully-staffed family centers conduct workshops on learning strategies, and provide referrals to social services, and/or host informal gatherings.</p>	<p>Develop a family resource room with toys, games, and books to borrow.</p>	<p>School newsletters with generic messages</p>
<p>4. Relationship-building home visits provided by teachers, voluntary for both teachers and families and available for all families.</p>	<p>Coffee with the principal; Muffins with Moms; Donuts with Dads; Pastries with Parents</p>	<p>Potlucks, other traditional whole-school-based events</p>
<p>5. Host story quilting workshops and poetry slams where families, teachers and students all tell their stories, share their work.</p>	<p>School book club and authors' tea featuring student writers</p>	<p>Student performances</p>
<p>6. Classroom observations are conducted with mini-lessons; weekly data-sharing folders go home, with space for family comments; academic parent-teacher teams.</p>	<p>Interactive homework with tips for home learning</p>	<p>Curriculum nights</p>
<p>7. Schedule and promote student-led conferences with portfolios of student work, followed by 1:1 conversations about learning, to set goals.</p>	<p>Parent-teacher conferences twice a year, available evenings and weekend</p>	<p>Parent-teacher conferences, during work day</p>
<p>8. Provide tours of school led by students and community walks led by expert families who know the ropes.</p>	<p>Monthly breakfasts for new families</p>	<p>Visit school by appointment</p>
<p>9. School council has voice in all major decisions, develops and supports parent-initiated projects.</p>	<p>Parent organization meets with principal to discuss suggestions</p>	<p>Suggestion box in office</p>
<p>10. Offer a candidate forum at school and community events; parents and students meet in advance, prepare to ask questions regarding issues affecting families.</p>	<p>Candidates for election invited to school and community events</p>	<p>School and community events</p>
<p>11. Host family leadership classes to strengthen family capacity to navigate the system, be effective advocates, and take part in school councils and committees.</p>	<p>Adult learning evenings</p>	<p>Parenting classes</p>

Chart 3: What Does High-Impact Family Engagement Look Like in Middle and High School?

Higher Impact on Student Learning and Development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
<p>1. Transition program – events at feeder schools, tours of new school, 4-week school prep summer course – welcomes families to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Convey college/career prep focus – e.g., your student will graduate in 4 years with college acceptance letter in hand</li> <li>▪ Relate academic programs to careers</li> <li>▪ Prepare students for middle/high school work</li> <li>▪ Help families construct their role in supporting their students’ success</li> </ul>	<p>Offer a fall family academy to orient incoming families to expectations of students, such as attendance requirements and credits needed for grade advancement/graduation.</p>	<p>At orientation, families pick up their students’ class schedules, bus passes, and tour the school.</p>
<p>2. Offer workshops for families focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Courses needed to graduate and go to college/postsecondary education</li> <li>▪ What high-level academic work looks like at each grade level</li> <li>▪ Where to get needed help for students</li> <li>▪ Tests, applications and timelines required for college or trade schools</li> <li>▪ How to complete financial assistance applications</li> </ul>	<p>Staff conduct trainings for families to help them understand how to navigate the requirements of high school.</p>	<p>Information sheets about school programs and college resources, including financial assistance applications, are available in the school office.</p>
<p>3. Develop an advisory system so each student has an adult advisor who develops close relationships with families to co-design students’ academic program, set up regular communications, and serve as the main contact.</p>	<p>Parent liaisons check in with parents about use of homework help and other resources for students.</p>	<p>Families receive early notices from the school when their students are falling behind.</p>
<p>4. Monitoring progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coursework sequence and college/career track requirements are clear and explicit</li> <li>▪ Advisors keep parents current on student progress, with focus on students at risk</li> <li>▪ Parents invited to exhibits of student work, where students present and critique their work</li> <li>▪ Parents are reminded to check classroom websites for information on projects and student work</li> <li>▪ Student-led conferences review portfolio of student work, supports needed to do their best work and stay on track</li> </ul>	<p>Family liaisons check in with parents to offer homework help and other resources for students.</p>	<p>The school contacts families when students are having a problem with academics or behavior.</p>



Higher Impact on Student Learning and Development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
<p>5. College and career planning begins early, a graduation plan is completed by end of 9th grade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Families invited to post-secondary education fairs</li> <li>▪ Staff recruit parents to visit colleges</li> <li>▪ Workshops for parents on PSAT, SAT, and ACT exams; offer help completing college applications and applying for financial aid</li> <li>▪ Families given guiding questions for discussing Student Success Plans with their student to reflect on successes, areas for growth and new goals</li> <li>▪ Special assistance for undocumented families</li> </ul>	<p>Offer a college/career program fair every fall, with focus on 11th and 12th graders. Family liaisons and community partners reach out to invite families and remind them to review the Student Success Plan for their child.</p>	<p>Families can make appointments to confer with guidance counselors, and receive a handout with information about how to review the Student Success Plan.</p>
<p>6. Family organizations and leadership represent all families in the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Family leaders sit on college pathways and school leadership teams</li> <li>▪ Family organizations conduct focus groups with families to surface issues and report back to school leadership</li> </ul>	<p>Homework help and mentoring programs to ensure families know about and can access academic help for their student.</p>	<p>Volunteers distribute flyers throughout the community to remind parents about events and parent-teacher conferences.</p>



Chart 4: What Does High-Impact Family Engagement Look Like in After School Programs?

Higher Impact on student learning and development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
1. After school classes are linked to school curriculum. Teachers and program staff collaborate to track students' growth targets and keep families up to date.	A teacher from the school shares data with tutoring staff on student skills.	Staff informs families that the program offers tutoring on reading, math or other subjects.
2. The program offers informal gatherings for families, school staff, and community partners to foster collaboration and information sharing.	Students perform and show their work at frequent family nights.	Staff will be available to talk with families on orientation day.
3. Staff and families co-develop intervention plans to address students' social and/or academic concerns.	Program staff interviews families regarding their children's successes and challenges.	On orientation day, families fill out an information form.
4. Regular meetings with families are scheduled to discuss student progress, share information, and confer on strategies to support learning.	Annual survey asks parents about students' experience with the program.	Tip sheets are sent home to promote student health and learning.
5. The after school program collaborates with other school-based and community programs to make the school a "hub" of activities for students, families and community members.	Program hosts information fairs about community resources and programs.	Community bulletin board posts notices about local happenings.
6. Family support groups and education classes promote family learning, develop job skills, and address health needs.	Staff refer families to GED and job training programs offered by community partners.	Families can sign up to volunteer.
7. "Community advocates" develop rapport with families of children at risk, provide advice and links to extra support, and help families navigate social services.	Program staff receive extra pay to serve as informal advisors and mentors to students.	Staff refers struggling children to an outside counseling program.
8. Local partners co-sponsor community, building and cultural events at an after school site, such as a health fair or heritage celebration, that attracts hundreds of families and community members.	Families and staff plan special events to honor student success and celebrate the beginning and end of the school year.	Program offers fall and spring celebrations for students and families.
9. Parents learn ways to foster their own and their children's education, support their families financially, develop social networks, and advocate for high quality schools.	Program staff invite public officials to attend events, meet families, and answer questions about community issues.	Program office displays flyers and brochures about community resources and learning opportunities.

# ACTION PLAN

This space provided for ideas and plans for engaging families as partners in their child's education.

Current Practice	Desired State	Next Steps	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Timeline

## ENDNOTES

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## APPENDIX A:

### Sources of Input from Families and Other Stakeholders

Families (47%), educators (37%), and community members (16%) gave us their ideas in focus groups around the state.

- Monroe Intermediate School District, 2018
- Mecosta-Osceola Intermediate Schools, 2018 and 2019
- Eastern Upper Peninsula, 2018
- Cheboygan-Otsego-Presque Isle Intermediate School District, 2018
- Saginaw Intermediate School District, 2018
- Kent Intermediate School District, 2018 and 2019
- Matrix Detroit, 2018
- Brilliant Detroit, 2018
- Hanley Academy, 2018
- Special Populations Conference, 2019
- Michigan School Health Coordinator's Association, 2019
- Oakland Schools, 2019
- UP McKinney Vento Conference, 2019
- West Shore Educational Service District, 2019

## APPENDIX B:

### Selected Research References

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