

What Does It Mean To Be “Engaged Or Involved?”

The distinction between involvement and engagement is important. A definition of involve is “to enfold or envelope;” conversely, engage can be defined as “to come together and interlock.” Thus, involvement implies doing to, whereas engagement implies doing with. Moreover, the term parent engagement indicates a shared and continuous responsibility for student achievement and learning that occurs across multiple settings.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) - Legal definition

“(32) PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT.—The term ‘parental involvement’ means the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:

“(A) that parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning.

“(B) that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school.

“(C) that parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child.

“(D) the carrying out of other activities, such as those described in section 1118.”⁸

Parent Engagement Committee - Definition

Parent Engagement: a collaborative partnership. While the term “**parent involvement**” is recognized by the committee, for the purposes of this document the phrase “**parent engagement**” will be used to indicate all activities that parents undertake to help their children succeed in school and life.⁹

Parent engagement is vital to student success and as one can see it has been recognized within state and federal legislation as well as in school and district policies. Therefore it is important to recognize that a partnership between schools and parents can contribute significantly to a child’s education and academic success.

Parent involvement is a common term used to bring teachers and parents together in schools. Parents who are “involved” serve the school’s agenda by doing what educators ask or expect parents to do. The focus of parent involvement is that the school/educator is driving the outcome.

Parent engagement also brings parents and schools together however the perspective and expectation is that parents are "partners" bringing their own knowledge "together" with schools, share decision making, determination of goals and outcomes.

Parent engagement is comprehensive in nature, with the school consistently interfacing with parents at many points, in many venues, over the course of the schooling years.

Parent engagement means that school personnel listen to the families who aren't engaged, assess what we really believe about parents, and celebrate all of the things families do at home for school success.

Parent engagement involves personal contact, educational support at home, two-way communication between home and school, parents involved in school decision making, parents as volunteers working on student achievement, schools as parent resource sites, and schools as welcoming places.

Additional Information & Resources

1. *Involvement or Engagement?* <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may11/vol68/num08/Involvement-or-Engagement.aspx>
2. *Research Brief: Parent Engagement in Education* <http://www.fscp.org/upload/newsletters/CELL%20research%20brief.pdf>
3. *Beyond Random Acts: Family, School, and Community Engagement as an Integral Part of Education Reform* <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/beyond-random-acts-family-school-and-community-engagement-as-an-integral-part-of-education-reform>
4. Michigan eLibrary: Parents Resources <http://kids.mel.org/Parents>