

# Family-School-Community Partnerships Planning Guide

*Version 1*

This guide is designed to give your community, school or parent team steps to develop a plan for partnering with families to support the health, well-being, and educational needs of children and families. It begins with assessing where you are (the needs, assets, goals identified by your team) and the *priority areas* that your team plans to impact. Your team will then select and plan *strategies* that build the capacity of families and professionals to be strong partners in addressing these issues.

The guide is written in steps, with questions for your team to consider and spaces to record your ideas. Your team may enter this process at any place depending on your needs, and may loop back to previous steps at times when you need to. Planning is not always a linear process and there is no one right way to plan. Use this guide as needed to help your team build a strong plan that you will implement and monitor.

Note, this process is the work of a team of representatives who are invested in the outcome. The strength of any plan comes from the people who are committed to seeing it through. Your planning team needs parent/caregiver representatives amongst others as outlined in the companion document to this guide, *Establishing a Team of Family Engagement Partners*. It is important that parent/caregiver members of your family engagement team are equal partners in this planning process.



## Phase 1: Needs Assessment

**Step 1.** Begin this process by determining what you know. Refer to your current plan(s) for supporting mental and behavioral health, academic achievement or school climate. Consider these questions. What are the student/family needs that you might address? What current programs do you have in place for children or youth that do not currently have a family engagement component? What information would be helpful for families? What sources of data do you have? How representative of your population of children, students or families is this data (e.g. can you generalize from this data to your targeted families)? Use the spaces below to capture your discussion.

| <b>What do you know about the needs of your students/families?</b> | <b>How do you know (Source of data)?</b> | <b>How many children or families in your community are affected? (Few, Some, Most)</b> |
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**Step 2.** What needs will you prioritize this year for your family engagement plan? A ranking process can be helpful for your team as you discuss the work you will undertake this year. In the process outlined below, each need should be ranked based on a common set of criteria. Your team may select different criteria than those suggested here. Scores of 3=high; 2=moderate; and 1=low can be assigned based on each Family Engagement Team member’s review against each criterion. A total score can be calculated by adding scores across criteria. Final scores are meant to provide a foundation for discussion. As a result of this step, team members should decide which potential priority areas to include in their Family Engagement Plan this year.

| <b>Priority Area</b> | <b>Criteria 1:<br/>Expected level of<br/>impact on intended<br/>outcomes for<br/>children and youth<br/>(3, 2, or 1)</b> | <b>Criteria 2:<br/>Builds the capacity<br/>of families and/or<br/>professionals to<br/>partner<br/>(3, 2, or 1)</b> | <b>Criteria 3:<br/>Supported<br/>by Data<br/>(3, 2, or 1)</b> | <b>Total Score<br/>(out of 9)</b> |
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**Step 3.** With your team, consider the priority areas you have selected. What additional information about the priority area(s) will assist you with identifying the most appropriate strategy(ies)? How will you get this information? For example, you may want to ask a community agency that has more information about the area you have identified. Or, you may want to talk with a small group of parents more in depth questions about their ideas and experiences to help your team have a deeper understanding.

| Priority Area | What more do you want to know? | How will you gather this information? |
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**Step 4.** What strategies or activities are currently in place or planned that develop partnerships with families to address the priority areas you have identified. If there are efforts in place to address this issue, list those strategies here and consider for each: Should this strategy continue, expand to reach more families or children, cease? This is an important conversation to avoid duplication and layering on more programs or activities, and to ensure that limited resources like time and funding are used wisely.

| Priority Area | Strategy Currently in Place | Action (Continue, Expand, Change, or Eliminate) |
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## Phase 2: Planning

The goal of developing a plan for engaging families is to develop respectful, working relationships between professionals and families for supporting positive school climates, positive behavior choices, improving academic outcomes and increasing awareness and access to mental health services.

**Step 1.** Where is there room for growth and improvement relative to your priority areas? Discuss which families you need to partner with to affect change and how you might begin developing these partnerships in the next 12 months.



Record a summary of your ideas here.

**Step 2.** Consider strategies that are high quality, will build on the assets of the professionals and families, and will also build their capacity to partner.

### Types of family engagement strategies...

- *Relationship Building*
- *Parenting*
- *Communication*
- *Participation*
- *Home learning*
- *Decision-making*
- *Collaboration with the Community*

Adapted from Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Sheldon, S. B., et al. (2009). School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action (3rd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.





What types of family engagement strategies would address your priority area(s) this year?

### **Characteristics** of high quality family engagement...

- *Values the knowledge and assets of family and community participation,*
- *Has both a prevention and proactive focus,*
- *Promotes dialogue,*
- *Emphasizes the development of trusting and respectful relationships between professionals and families,*
- *Can be sustained in some form, and builds on past relationships or programs,*
- *Provides access for all families,*
- *Motivates people to be an active member of the community, and*
- *Provides multiple ways to be involved.*



How will your team incorporate these characteristics of high quality engagement in your family engagement strategies?





**Step 3.** Determine if impacting the priority area requires Tier I, II and/or Tier III strategies:

- Tier I – preventative, proactive practices for all children and families
- Tier II – practices meant to provide supports and interventions quickly and efficiently for specific families or children to address an asset or need identified by your team.
- Tier III – intensive practices for a small number of individual children or families at a time of an identified serious need

Use the table below to sketch out the strategies you will put in place in the next 12 months.

(Can duplicate the following page to accommodate multiple goals).





Priority Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Time Period: \_\_\_\_\_

Planning Team: \_\_\_\_\_

| Priority Area | Family Engagement Strategy | Description of Strategy<br><i>How much, how often and with whom?</i> | Tier I, Tier II, Tier III | Which adults will be impacted<br>(professionals, parents/caregivers, administrators) | What is the expected change? | What will success look like? |
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## Phase 3: Check Your Plan

Once you have drafted your plan, consider these important findings from research about effective family engagement strategies. Consider each of the eight points. Return to your plan and make improvements so that the actions planned reflect as many characteristics of effective strategies as possible.

1. Is the strategy based on an **asset-mindset**, building on the strengths of families and professionals? Is it clear that the cultures and values of families are understood and accounted for by this strategy?
2. Are you starting your engagement strategy **early enough to prevent issues** and proactively address your goal?
3. Does the strategy **promote dialogue** (both listening and informing) between families and professionals?
4. Does the strategy contribute to developing positive, supportive **relationships** between families or families and professionals?
5. Is the family engagement strategy **sustained over time** – long enough to have the intended impact?
6. Are **barriers to access addressed** so that all families can receive the same opportunity and information in an understandable format?
7. What aspects of the strategy will **engage or interest families** and help provide motivation to participate?
8. Does the strategy provide for **multiple ways** of gaining information and multiple ways of participating for families?



## Phase 4: Implementation and Monitoring

Every plan requires action! Getting to the details of the tasks that need to be completed and who is responsible is an important step for success. With your planning team, consider the tasks needed to implement your family engagement strategies. Who is responsible for completing them? What resources (people, place, supplies, funding, etc.) are required? What is the timeline for completion?

Use the table below, or another format you prefer to determine the steps you need to implement the strategies you have planned.

### Tasks and Responsibilities for each Strategy

Priority Area: \_\_\_\_\_

| Strategy | Tasks | Person Responsible | Resources | Timeline |
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## Phase 5: Evaluation

**Step 1.** Monitoring the impact of implementation of your plan is another important step. It will be important to be clear about the source of data and to have a plan for how and by whom data will be collected.

| Strategy | Expected change | How will you know if you've achieved success? (Source of data) | Who will gather this information? | When will data be collected? |
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**Step 2.** Were your strategies successful? Are there refinements needed to your plan?

| <b>Strategy</b> | <b>What do we know from the data?</b> | <b>Why did change occur/not occur?</b> (e.g. was the strategy implemented with fidelity?) | <b>What steps will you take to continue/improve the impact on the expected change?</b> (e.g. chose a different strategy; do more of the strategy; change the target population/timing of implementation) |
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Building partnerships between families and professionals is critical to creating the supports and communication necessary to support the healthy development and learning of all children. The process for building, maintaining and strengthening these partnerships is ongoing. The plan your team develops will only be effective if it is carried through, evaluated and then improved. Improvement of this kind is continuous and is required to meet the ever-changing resources, strengths, issues and challenges that we face.

The process for writing and improving this guide is also ongoing. Feedback from your team about the usefulness of the guide and your ideas for improvement are welcome. Your feedback will help us continuously improve this work. If you have suggestions for improving this guide, please submit them to Dr. Barbara Boone at [boone.32@osu.edu](mailto:boone.32@osu.edu).

Thank you for your dedication to supporting Ohio's families.