

High School Family Engagement in Literacy

- A list of examples for teachers and administrators for planning -

Notes: These are “Tier 1” examples – in other words, they are examples that would apply to ALL/MOST students and their families based on core Tier I instructional goals. Share with families at the beginning of the school year that you plan to engage with them in these ways, so they know what to expect. Then, establish a regular pattern of communication (weekly, biweekly, monthly). Build relationships with families by listening well, emphasizing the connection of their engagement to their student’s academic success, following up with requests in a timely way, and offering developmentally-appropriate information that is easy to understand.

Examples of Family Engagement in High School Content-Specific Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary

1. Share information with families about how you plan to build their adolescent’s vocabulary this school year. And/Or, provide opportunities for students to practice telling a family member about this topic (they could turn and talk to a classmate to practice, for example).
2. Honor the role of families. Share how awesomely important their everyday conversations and games together as a family are to their adolescent’s vocabulary development and mental health.
 - a. Provide a specific resource to families about high-use words in academic settings. For example: <https://ohiofamiliesengage.osu.edu/2022/12/06/supporting-your-adolescents-vocabulary-a-list-of-commonly-used-academic-words/>
 - b. Consider providing upcoming content-specific vocabulary to families (tangent, hypotenuse, etc.) and some conversation starters they can use at home about how the content connects to future careers.
3. Provide a forum for families to ask questions about vocabulary development or other literacy-related questions. Listen to parent/caregiver questions and concerns, and provide examples and resources to address their questions. If you don’t know the answer, start with “I’m glad you asked - I would like to take some time to [ask other teacher/think about the best answer/check the upcoming curriculum/check notes about student]. Can I [call/email/text] you tomorrow?”

Examples of Family Engagement in the Development of Writing Skills

Writing Skills

1. Share information with families about the writing/typing skills their adolescent will be learning this school year.
2. Listen to parent/caregiver questions and concerns about their student’s writing/typing development. Provide examples and resources to address their questions.
 - a. If applicable, provide families with a free resource to help their student improve their ability to type or write, such as: <https://www.typingclub.com/>
3. Honor the role of families. Share how important their regular writing practice is, and how that can be incorporated into daily home activities.
 - a. Provide a specific resource about writing at home. For example: <https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/tips-parents-struggling-adolescent-writers>. Consider breaking a resource like this one into smaller pieces, such as a “home writing idea of the week” for families.

Examples of Family Engagement Connecting Literacy Development to a Student's Future Life

Future Application

1. Share conversation prompts with students that they can use at home with their parents/caregivers/extended family adults. Make sure to give students a flexible timeline to complete this assignment, because as we know, families are busy and often have multiple, competing priorities on any given night. Two examples are below:
 - a. "How does what you are learning in school relate to what the adults in your life do for a living or on a daily basis? For example, if one of your parents works at a local doctor's office, do they need to know how to interact with patients in a calm and supportive manner, write/type up reports, format reports on a computer, and review complicated insurance information (advanced reading and comprehension skills)? What prior jobs taught them skills that led them to where they are today in that role?"
 - b. "What are some options for what you as a student might do in the future? Discuss as a family, and come back to school prepared to share about your discussion. (For example, begin a skilled trade, apply for a 2 or 4 year college, apply for a research or administrative job, join the military, get a retail or sales job, other job, begin managing a household, etc.) What skills do you need to do well at that future thing? Talk about this as a family."

Examples of Family Engagement in Learning from Credible Sources

Finding Credible Sources

1. Using an assignment prompt such as this one about finding information from multiple sources to address a topic or answer a question (<https://ela.thinkport.org/mod12/index.html>), build-in a family engagement component. Provide students with multiple options like the ones below for a "family/friend chat" related to the assignment.
 - a. "During or after an upcoming mealtime with your family, ask someone "What are your favorite places to go for the news or learn about new things? What is your favorite source for local news (Could be a person, online source, or print media)? What is your favorite source for national or world news? How can you tell if you can trust these sources of information?"
 - b. "Write an email, text, or snail mail letter to someone you know (aunt/uncle, grandparent, family friend, godparent, teacher, etc.), sharing with them a life update, and sharing about what you learned in this assignment. Invite them to write back to you about their favorite ways to learn about new topics."

Reflection Questions



1. How might you adapt one of these examples to apply specifically to family engagement for students currently receiving additional Tiers of academic support beyond Tier I?
2. How might you adapt one or more of these examples to be accessible to more families?