



Building Bridges

A Framework for Family
Engagement in Maine



About Maine Department of Education

The Maine Department of Education (Maine DOE) is dedicated to promoting the best learning opportunities for all Maine students. The Maine DOE embraces its role as a partner in this work of disseminating family engagement practices, recognizing that family engagement is a keystone skill of a whole child approach to education.

The practices outlined within this framework have been reviewed by specialists within the Office of School and Student Supports who support professional development in the areas of school health, social and emotional learning, family engagement, and supports for highly mobile students with the aim of centering family engagement within the work of the Maine DOE and the schools it supports. The Office of School and Student Supports is indebted to the specialists who have been involved in this work across the department and in other agencies and non-profit entities in Maine.

About MAEC

MAEC is a national education non-profit dedicated to fostering positive learning environments where every child reaches their full potential. We partner with districts and schools across the country to improve systems and strengthen family-school partnership.

MAEC leads Maine's Statewide Family Engagement Center, Consortium for Engaging Families Across Maine (CEFAM). CEFAM serves all educators – from state agencies to school districts to school staff and early care providers – and families by developing resources, co-designing learning opportunities, and fostering dialogue designed to help families connect with local schools and support their children's development and learning.

MAEC is a proud partner of the Maine DOE; Maine Community Action Partnership (MeCAP); Maine Parent Federation (MPF); National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE); the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS); and ParentPowered.

Disclaimers

The contents of this product were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE)). The Department does not mandate or prescribe practices, models, or other activities described or discussed in this document. The contents of this product may contain examples of, adaptations of, and links to resources created and maintained by another public or private organization. The Department does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of this outside information. The content of this product does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department. This product is not intended to represent the views or policy of, or be an endorsement of any views expressed or materials provided by, any Federal agency. [89 FR 70333, Aug. 29, 2024]

All product names, logos, and brands mentioned in this publication are the property of their respective owners. Reference to these products does not imply endorsement by the owners or by MAEC.

Suggested citation: Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc. (2026). Building Bridges: A Framework for Family Engagement in Maine. Silver Spring, MD. July 2026.

Copyright © 2026 Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc. All rights reserved.

Table of Contents

Preface	i
Introduction	1
Definitions	4
Chapter 1: The Benefits of Family Engagement	7
Chapter 2: Principles of Family Engagement	9
Chapter 3: Models of Family Leadership	14
Chapter 4: Linking Families to Learning	18
Chapter 5: Developing a Family Engagement Strategy	23
Conclusion	33
Resources	35
<i>Appendix A: Ideas for At-Home Activities</i>	36
<i>Appendix B: Tech Tools</i>	39
<i>Appendix C: Supporting Students with Special Needs</i>	40
<i>Appendix D: Resources for Multilingual Learners</i>	41
<i>Appendix E: Assessments to Examine Organizational Readiness</i>	42
<i>Appendix F: NAFSCE Family Engagement Core Competencies</i>	43
<i>Appendix G: Key Maine Department of Education Offices & Contacts</i>	44
References	46
Photo Credits	52



Preface

Building Bridges: A Framework for Family Engagement in Maine grew out of the need to create a comprehensive foundation to engage families in the education field in Maine. This initiative was led by the Consortium for Engaging Families Across Maine (CEFAM), which operates the Maine Statewide Family Engagement Center. CEFAM is a project of MAEC, Inc. (MAEC).

The framework represents a collaborative effort from key partners and leaders across Maine. We extend special thanks to the Maine CDC, Division of Disease Prevention, Maternal and Child Health; the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE); Maine Parent Federation; the Maine Department of Education, Office of Special Services and Inclusive Education; and a 15-person advisory committee of parents, educators, and community members from across Maine. We are grateful for the deep knowledge, years of experience, and passion that each of these groups brought to the project.



The following frameworks served as essential guides in organizing this publication:

- **Family Partnership Framework** (Maine CDC Division of Disease Prevention, Maternal and Child Health, 2025). Available at <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/healthy-living/maternal-and-child-health/special-health-care-needs/care-coordination/family-voice>
- **Family Engagement: A Collaboration between Providers, Educators, and Families** (Maine Parent Federation, 2024). Available at <https://www.mpf.org/download/family-engagement/>
- **Maine State Inclusive Education Framework** (Maine Department of Education, Office of Special Services and Inclusive Education). Available in 2026.

Building Bridges: A Framework for Family Engagement in Maine is intended for use by schools, School Administrative Units (SAUs), programs, agencies, organizations, and parent leaders across Maine. We hope this framework helps readers find new ways to deepen and strengthen relationships with families and communities, in and out of education settings.



Introduction

If you have chosen to read this framework, you likely already know that effective family engagement is key to children's success. After all, decades of research have shown that students with engaged families are more likely to thrive academically and socially, boast higher self-confidence, and earn higher grades (Mapp et al., 2022; Ross, 2023).

However, all too often, family engagement is considered a one-off event. It's so much more than that.

Family engagement is a foundational strategy for developing effective, fair, and responsive services. When educators, providers, and agencies collaborate with families as shared decision-makers, they develop programs and services that are more responsive and community-driven and improve student outcomes. Family engagement is most effective when it is systemic, sustained, and embedded into the core functions of institutions and organizations.

Families bring invaluable expertise rooted in their lived experiences and a deep understanding of their children's needs.



Educators, healthcare providers, agency staff, and community-based organizations contribute specialized knowledge and resources.

Establishing strong relationships between families and educators requires a clear roadmap. This framework outlines the principles, strategies, and practices that can guide the development and sustainment of these relationships to ultimately enhance outcomes for Maine children and families in educational settings.

We invite families, educators, administrators, agency staff, and community-based organizations to use this framework as a guide to develop effective family engagement in educational settings.

The framework is organized as follows:

- **Definitions** offer alignment on shared terminology used in the framework.
- **Chapter 1** discusses the benefits of family engagement.
- **Chapter 2** outlines the foundational principles necessary for strong partnerships.
- **Chapter 3** provides an overview of the family leadership development continuum.
- **Chapter 4** identifies specific strategies to link families to learning.
- **Chapter 5** introduces a nine-step approach to developing a family engagement strategy.
- **Conclusion** closes the Framework, but don’t forget to check out the Resources.

How to use the framework

Audience	How to use
Families	Gain tools to connect school learning to the home (“learning to home”) and collaborate more closely with educators.
Teachers	Learn practices and strategies to collaborate with families in and out of the classroom.
School and SAU leaders	Review policies and procedures to increase family engagement and supportive community partnerships.
State agencies	Support and strengthen local partnerships.
Community-based organizations	Identify opportunities for engagement with schools and families.
Professional development/ learning specialists	Inform training provided to teachers, administrators, family and community coordinators, and other staff.

Key symbols to follow

Many of the chapters include insights from Mainers and additional resources. The following symbols will be used to indicate each of these items:



Insights that came directly from Mainers, gathered from responses to the Maine Family Engagement Needs Assessment (MEFENA), members of the CEFAM advisory committee, and other sources.



Additional resources that can be leveraged to support strategies recommended within the Framework. Please refer to the Resources section for specific activities and more in-depth resource lists.



Definitions

This framework uses terms common in the field of family engagement. We establish the following definitions to help partners across all areas of family engagement navigate the framework with a shared understanding and application of these terms.

The family engagement definition used in this framework was developed by community members, practitioners, and team leaders from Maine, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, and facilitated by MAEC. All of the other definitions were informed by the Maine CDC, Division of Disease Prevention, Maternal and Child Health.

Family

A primary support system for a child's growth and well-being. "Family" refers primarily to the variety of people who care for a child (caregivers). This includes biological, adoptive, and foster parents; grandparents; guardians; siblings; and close friends. It can also include people bound together by mutual consent, birth, adoption, or placement. Within this framework, we use the terms "family" and "parents and caregivers" interchangeably.

Family Engagement

A collaborative partnership among schools, families, and communities that embraces diverse strengths, cultures, and experiences to create a supportive environment where every student can thrive.

Successful family engagement includes the following elements:



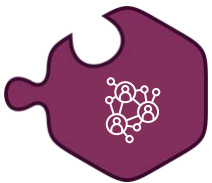
Affirming the role of families as partners

Schools must offer opportunities, communication, and support for families to advocate for all children. Families, in turn, can more effectively advocate and collaborate with school communities to create inclusive learning environments by contributing their unique strengths and cultural knowledge. This approach builds a school community that values and includes every family's input.



Enriching learning and well-being

Schools facilitate families' roles as advocates for their children's learning. This ensures that families are equipped to support their children's academic and emotional success.



Strengthening community relationships

Family engagement collaboration happens when all members of a school community, including organizations that support families, work together to continuously seek understanding, give respect, and share responsibility and support for student well-being and development. This collaboration creates a strong support network for families and student success.

Family Partner/Family Leader

A person with lived experience who actively collaborates with those at a systems level to support and advocate for the needs of their family, the community, or the system. Family partners can leverage the lived experience of their family's needs, particularly regarding education, health, or well-being. Family leaders play a crucial role in creating partnerships built on mutual respect, trust, and shared goals.

Lived Experience

Personal events that provide knowledge or understanding that others who have not lived those experiences may not have.

Partnership

A relationship between people who cooperate and share responsibility to achieve a specific goal. Partnerships begin with a structured and predictable process, regular and open communication, and opportunities to provide feedback (Maine Department of Education, 2025d). The terms “family partnership” and “family engagement” are often used interchangeably. For clarity, this framework uses the term “family engagement.”



Chapter 1

The Benefits of Family Engagement

The authors of a recent family and community engagement book said it best: when families, schools, and community partners collaborate to support children, everyone wins (Mapp et al., 2022). Family engagement benefits children academically and socially, strengthens families' confidence to advocate for their children, and improves the quality of educational and health services overall.

How Children Benefit from Family Engagement

Strong partnerships between families and educators improve student outcomes. Students with engaged families experience (Hanover Research, 2023; Minshew, 2024):

Academic growth

- Faster literacy development
- Higher academic performance
- Increased enrollment in advanced coursework
- Higher rates of post-secondary participation
- Better attendance

Personal and social growth

- Better behavior
- Improved mental health
- Stronger motivation and self-confidence
- Stronger social skills
- Higher self-esteem

How Families Benefit from Family Engagement

When families feel connected to their children's educational experiences, they often become proud advocates for their children's schools, contributing to a culture of shared responsibility and support. Families can also influence policies that better reflect their needs, leading to more responsive programming for students (Hanover Research, 2023). The benefits of family engagement for families are evident across all socioeconomic backgrounds (Maine Parent Federation, 2024).

How Public Agencies Benefit from Family Engagement

Studies show that family engagement at the decision-making level across systems like healthcare, child welfare, and education leads to more tailored and effective services for children.



In healthcare, shared decision-making improves treatment adherence and overall health outcomes (Hoque, 2024).



In child welfare, family involvement in case planning contributes to more effective interventions and fewer out-of-home placements (Melz, 2021).



In education, schools that include families in decision-making processes often see gains in attendance, performance, and school climate. Studies have shown that schools with strong family engagement practices are ten times more likely to show gains in both reading and math scores (Hart et al., 2020). School staff also gain a deeper understanding of community needs, which fosters greater transparency and stronger relationships.

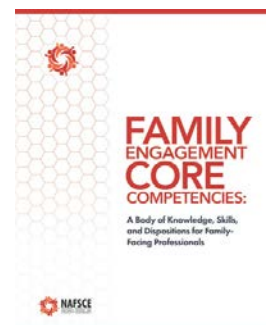
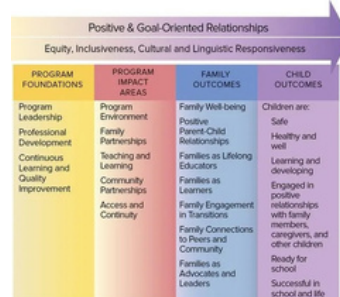
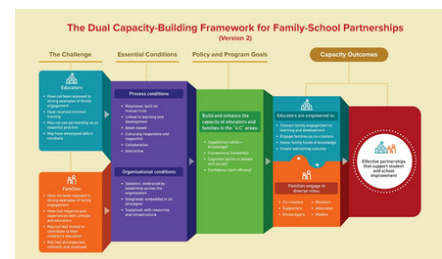


Chapter 2

Principles of Family Engagement

Many national frameworks have been published over the decades that speak to research-based foundational principles for family and community engagement. Our framework was informed by the following national frameworks, which are listed by publication date.

We invite readers to explore these resources and strategies on the next page to enhance family engagement:



Framework*	Author	Year	Description
Family Engagement Core Competencies	NAFSCE	2022	- Identifies eight core competencies that speak to what family-facing professionals need to know and be able to do to reflect, connect, collaborate, and lead alongside families - Can serve as a foundation for preparation programs and professional development offerings
National Standards for Family-School Partnerships	National Parent Teacher Association	2008 (revised 2021)	- Identifies six standards to help schools thrive in their partnerships with families - Used by many schools, districts, and some states
The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships (version 2)	Dr. Karen Mapp and Dr. Eyal Bergman, Harvard Graduate School of Education	2013 (revised 2019)	- Identifies that engagement is relational and built on a foundation of trust - Used by many schools and districts - The first version was funded by the U.S. Department of Education
School Family, and Community Partnerships	Joyce Epstein, The National Network of Partnership Schools	1997 (revised 2019)	- Identifies six types of parent involvement on a spectrum - Offers differentiated strategies based on types of engagement, as well as an annual publication of Promising Partnership Practices
The Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework	Head Start	2018	- Offers strategies to integrate family engagement throughout organizations - Presents an outcomes-driven approach, recognizing the different levels of impact of family engagement

**All frameworks are available in the works cited section.*

In developing the Maine Family Engagement Framework, we identified six foundational principles that are well-established and consistently appear across these national frameworks.



Mutual respect and trust



Ongoing learning and capacity-building



Transparency and shared decision-making



Role clarification, expectations, and feedback loops



Cultural competence and inclusivity



Support through educational transitions

These principles represent the fundamental approaches needed to build effective family engagement and should guide all strategies recommended in this framework.



Mutual respect and trust

It is important to approach building family engagement with respect for each other's perspectives, expertise, and roles. Building trust requires transparency, open communication, and a shared commitment to improving outcomes for children and families (Madalyn, 2025).

There is always room to improve trust-building efforts, especially among communities with a history of negative experiences with the school or SAU.



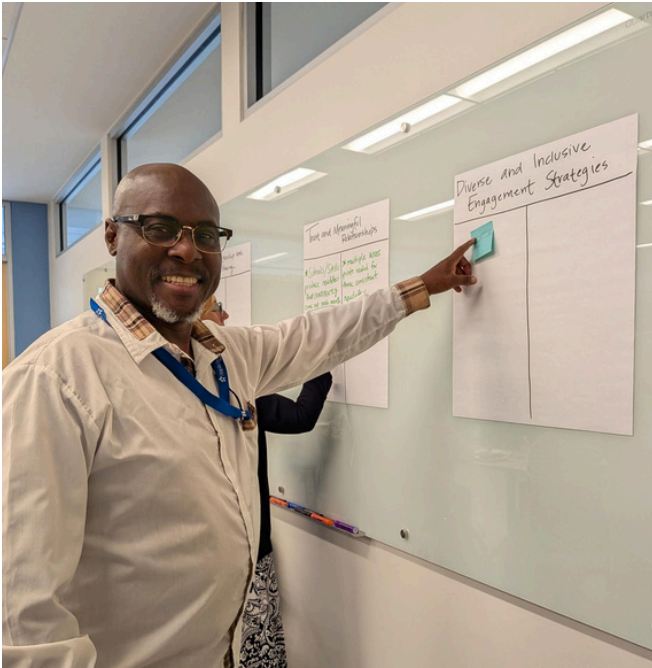
Transparency and shared decision-making

Treating families as equal partners in the educational process requires transparency and shared decision-making. To move beyond surface-level interactions to meaningful partnerships, schools and SAUs should ensure access to information, encourage open dialogue, and co-create solutions during the development, implementation, and evaluation of services (Hanover Research, 2023; Dworetzky, Hoover, & Walker, 2023). Ultimately, these actions lead to “power sharing,” the intentional distribution of decision-making authority and influence among all participating parties involved in a collaborative effort (Maine Department of Health and Human Services, 2025a).

The goal is to build a more inclusive partnership in which everyone has a voice in the process, and no single person has significantly more power than anyone else.



Cultural Competence and Inclusivity



Maine's geographic and cultural diversity is a unique strength: every SAU, every school, every student is different. To tailor engagement strategies to local needs, educators and administrators must learn to address linguistic, cultural, and economic barriers and to increase their flexibility and adaptability in teaching methods.

Creating an environment that is respectful of all cultural identities and experiences will facilitate family engagement and ensure that all parents and caregivers are welcome at the table (Shaikh & Honig, 2025).



Ongoing Learning and Capacity Building

Schools and SAUs can support families to actively participate in their child's education by providing capacity-building resources, tools, and training. School staff also benefit from ongoing professional development related to improving family engagement practices.

Schools and SAUs that provide educators with the skills and knowledge needed to build stronger relationships with families improve collaboration and student outcomes (Mapp & Bergman, 2019).





Role Clarification, Expectations, and Feedback Loops

Anyone who has worked on a team can tell you that clarifying roles from the start makes a difference. Doing so allows everyone to understand their responsibilities and expectations, reduces conflict, and increases trust (NAFSCE, 2022). However, when there are hiccups in the process, it's key to have processes that share and act on feedback, also known as “feedback loops.”

Creating feedback loops that promote clarity and collaboration ensures that the expertise and experience of families, educators, school leaders, and others are valued and integrated into the design, implementation, and evaluation of services.



For a visual representation of feedback loops, check out **Closing the Feedback Loop** (Family Voices). Available at <https://familyvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Feedback-Loop-Tip-Sheet.pdf>



Support Through Educational Transitions

Educational transitions are pivotal moments for students and their families, whether from Pre-K to Kindergarten, grade to grade, or graduating high school. These stages offer opportunities for schools and SAUs to address new expectations, unfamiliar environments, and shifting responsibilities. By providing guidance and support through these transitions, schools and SAUs can help families navigate the education system more confidently.

Families that feel prepared and supported are more likely to remain engaged, which in turn fosters continuity in learning and stability in student success (Michigan Department of Education, Office of Great Start, 2022).





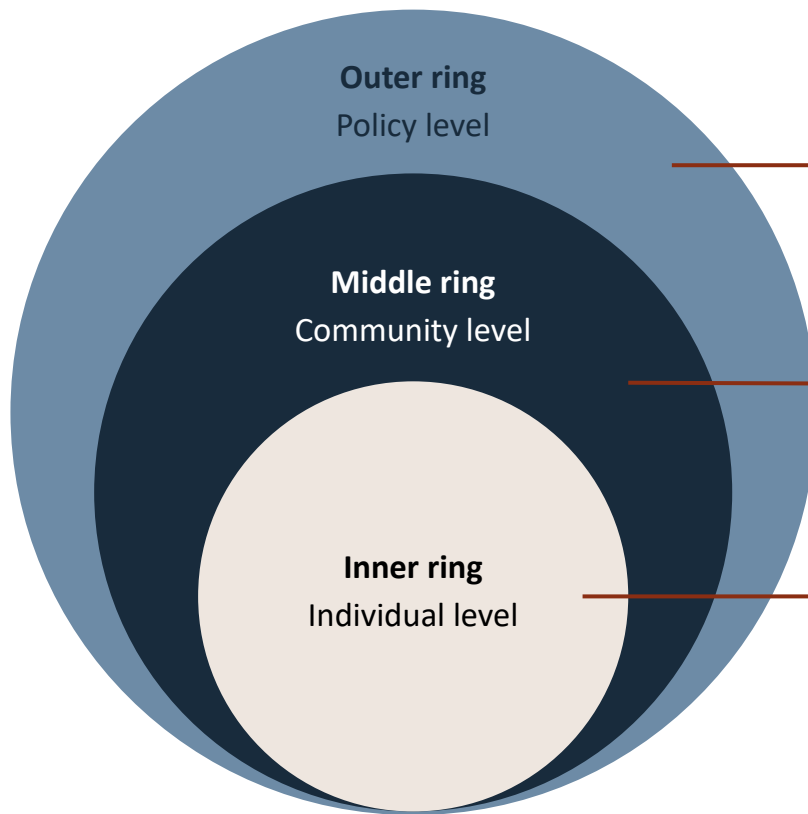
Chapter 3

Models of Family Leadership

There is no one right or best way to be a family leader. Many families engage with their children in direct ways, by reading at home and supporting play, and later become engaged in parent-teacher associations as their children engage more fully at school. Some families are deeply invested in their children's success but prefer to stay behind the scenes rather than sign up for activities. Schools shouldn't expect families to be engaged in every way; instead, they should provide opportunities for engagement across a continuum, supporting families at every interval.

Rings of Family Engagement

To understand how family leadership differs, it's helpful to first understand how families are able and willing to engage. There are three levels, or "rings," of engagement for families: the individual level, community level, and policy level (Maine Department of Health and Human Services, 2025a).



The family leader participates in **shaping policies and decisions** that have a broad impact.

The family leader focuses on supporting their **broader community**.

The family leader focuses on services that benefit their **personal family**.

- **Inner ring/Individual level:** Engagement is centered on a family's personal situation and needs. Activities focus on gathering and sharing insights about a family's experiences, challenges, and needs. This level of engagement helps identify barriers and gaps in services from the perspective of individual families.
- **Middle ring/Community level:** Families are invested in decisions or activities that impact their community, even if they are not personally affected. Families collaborate with agencies to support and benefit their broader community. They may define their community based on geography, shared experiences, or other common identities.
- **Outer ring/Policy level:** Families work as partners in planning, implementing, and evaluating policies as shared decision-makers. Families bring informed perspectives and advocate on behalf of specific populations or constituencies.



Elements of Family Engagement

MAEC's family leadership model expands on these levels of engagement by identifying four elements that family leadership develops (MAEC, 2023):

1. **Relationships:** Trusting, respectful relationships are the foundation of all family engagement. Programs must create spaces where families feel seen, heard, and valued, and their lived experiences are honored as assets.
2. **Knowledge and Skills:** Families need access to relevant information and training to navigate educational systems, understand their rights, and support their children's learning. Programs should address the needs of diverse populations, including immigrant families, fathers, and families of children with disabilities.
3. **Confidence and Efficacy:** As families gain knowledge, their confidence grows. Leadership programs should provide opportunities for families to practice leadership in safe, supportive environments, helping them recognize their own strengths and leadership potential.
4. **Advocacy:** Family leadership culminates in advocacy not only for one's own child but also for systemic change. MAEC's model encourages families to participate in decision-making spaces, from school improvement teams to state-level advisory committees.

Why are fathers included in "diverse populations"?

Engaging fathers presents a valuable opportunity for school systems to deepen their efforts. Fathers have reported to various state agencies in Maine that they want to be included as an equal partners in their child's development and engagement.



Steps to Develop Family Leaders

Consider the following actions to foster family leadership development:

- Provide orientation workshops and materials to families that cover leadership and collaboration opportunities. Include how to address concerns and feedback, and how to escalate unaddressed concerns. Ensure workshops and materials are adapted to the needs and experiences of different school communities.
- Promote shared decision-making by establishing an advisory body of families or by collaborating with the local parent organization (e.g., PTA/PTO). This organization can provide families with information about developments at the school and receive feedback from families on initiatives, policies, and other changes under consideration.
- Include family representatives on existing committees, such as the school improvement committee.
- Designate and compensate staff to serve as liaisons to families in these leadership roles, providing orientation, answering questions, and making them feel comfortable and welcome.
- Avoid jargon and assumptions about professional background knowledge when having conversations with families, and make sure the language is accessible.
- Offer leadership training for parents that can be applied in school committees, advisories, parent groups, and overall advocacy.



Chapter 4

Linking Families to Learning

For teachers and families to become confident co-educators, it's important to equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to collaboratively support student learning. This section identifies how schools can link families to learning, through learning at home, technology and resources, and supporting multilingual learners and students with special needs.

Learning at Home

Supporting learning at home creates a bridge between school and family, emphasizing the message that learning happens everywhere. The following activities and supports are designed for schools and educators to help families feel confident in their role as co-educators:

- Provide families with regular updates or explanations about what students are learning in school.
- Provide families with concrete strategies to support the current lessons, such as sending guides and materials for home learning activities in backpacks, through text messages, or via communication portals.

- Offer conversation prompts that go beyond, “How was your day at school?” such as “Tell me one fun thing that you learned today.”
- Consider the student’s specific interests and needs when offering strategies to extend classroom learning into the home.
- Send home classroom newsletters with ideas for practice.
- Encourage consistent, frequent one-on-one conversations between teachers and parents.
- Communicate without jargon. Many families do not know the educational terminology used by teachers and staff. Make sure that language is accessible and culturally appropriate.
- Encourage families to know what chronic absenteeism is and its impact on learning.



Resources available through the Maine Engagement and Attendance Center (MEAC) to increase student attendance:

- **Maine Engagement and Attendance Center.** Available at <https://www.maine.gov/doe/meac>
- **Student Attendance Tracking Tool** (Maine Department of Education). Available at <https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/Student%20Supports%20-%20MEAC%20Attendance%20Tracking%20Tool%20-%2011.25.2025.pdf>
- **Attendance Support Plan** (Maine Department of Education & Count Me In). Available at <https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/2024-06/Student%20Supports%20-%20Attendance%20Support%20Plan%20for%20Schools%20-%2006.7.2024.pdf>
- **15-Minute Attendance Team Agenda Template** (Maine Department of Education). Available at <https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/Student%20Supports%20-%2015-Minute%20Attendance%20Team%20Agenda%20Template%20-%2006.11.2025.pdf>

MEAC is a cross-departmental collaborative within the Maine Department of Education dedicated to increasing attendance in Maine schools.

Go to Appendix A for ideas for at-home activities with students of all ages.



Technology and Resources

When used thoughtfully, technology can be a powerful tool for connecting families to learning. The following strategies can help families stay informed and engaged:

- Ask families what form of communication works best for them. Some parents may prefer text updates or messages through online platforms, while others would prefer in-person conversations.
- Share information in multiple ways to meet diverse family needs. Consider the value of predictable timeframes and predictable platforms when communicating. For example, send a monthly email school newsletter on the 15th of every month.
- Provide training on how to use school technology systems (e.g., the school website, school communication platforms), so families feel comfortable and confident navigating them independently.
- Work with families to identify and overcome barriers to technology access.
- Offer both digital and non-digital resources so that families without access to technology can still access important materials.
- Highlight resources families value most, such as weekly teacher updates, school newsletters, and community program information.
- Provide families with information about learning apps that students use at school and may already be familiar with, as well as research-based recommendations for learning resources to help them make informed selections.



Maine families identified weekly teacher updates, monthly school newsletters, and information about community programs as especially helpful in supporting learning beyond the school day (MAEC, 2025b).



Go to Appendix B for examples of technology tools that can foster engagement.

Supporting Students with Special Needs

For families of students with special needs, meaningful engagement requires intentional support systems. Families should feel respected, supported, and valued as true partners in the education process. Beyond just meeting compliance requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), to foster authentic partnerships with families of students with special needs, schools and SAUs should implement the following strategies:

- Include families as partners in the development of their child's Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
- Create clear and accessible ways for families to share feedback on supports, services, and school climate.
- Communicate openly with families about student progress.
- Build connections with community organizations to support transitions and inclusion for students with special needs.
- Engage families in decision-making processes for their child.
- Share research-based strategies with families to support and accommodate each child's special needs.
- Provide external resources for families of students with special needs, such as the federally-funded Maine Parent Training and Information Center.

Go to Appendix C for a list of resources and organizations that support families of students with special needs.



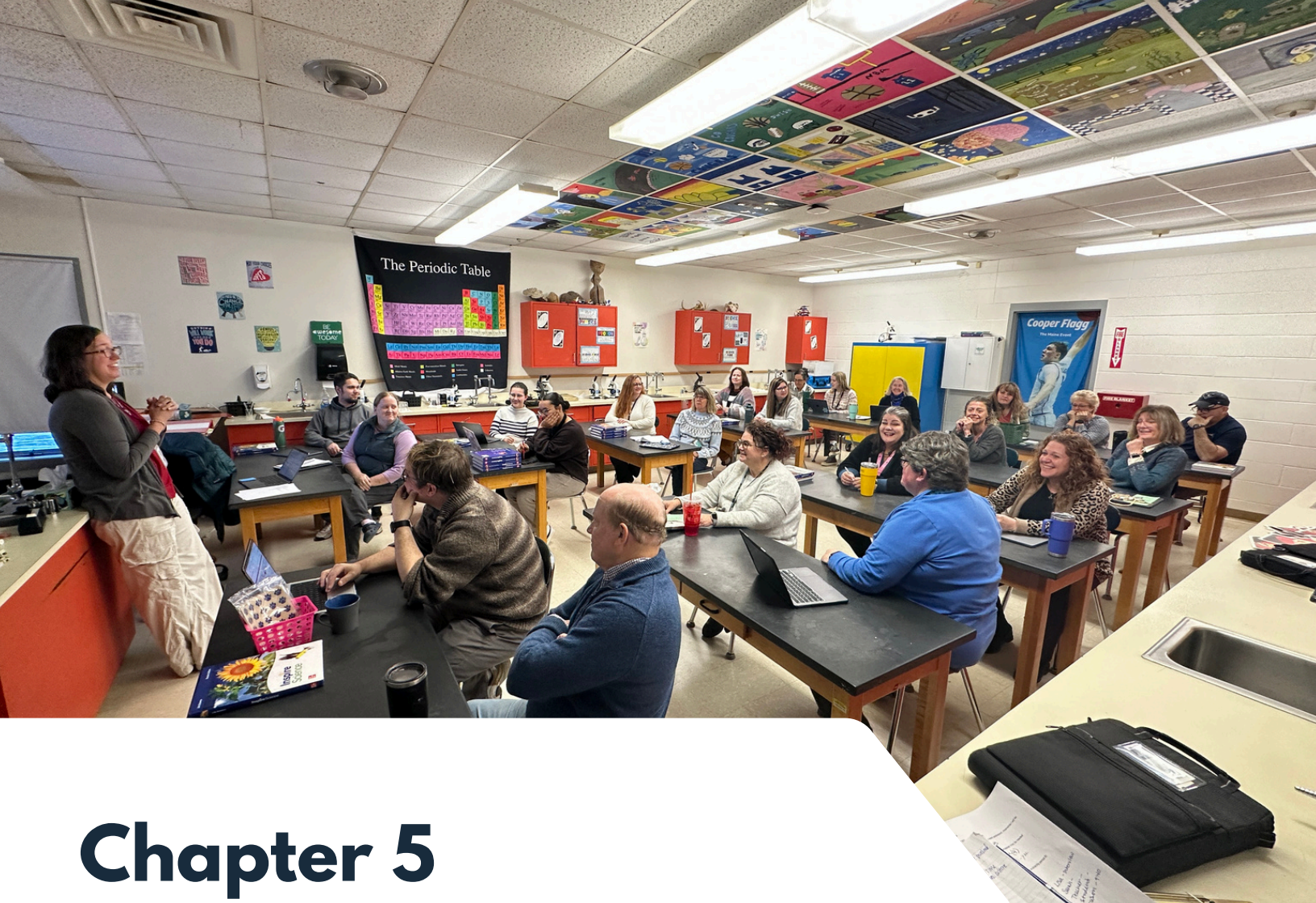
Supporting Families of Multilingual Learners

The principles outlined in this framework should also be applied to families of multilingual learners (MLL). However, some strategies must be adapted to address the context of families who are new to the United States and Maine, or speak a home language other than English. To foster this engagement, schools and SAUs should implement the following strategies:

- Make all information language accessible to families.
- Offer workshops and training to families provided by trusted partners.
- Offer information on the following topics:
 - How to navigate the local educational system
 - The variety of roles that families play in education in Maine
 - How to access resources available to them and their children
 - How to become informed partners in their children’s learning journey, including understanding and supporting English language proficiency
 - How MLL students are identified, assessed, and exit English Language Learner (ELL) programs
- Engage families in decision-making about MLL offerings at the school level, such as transitional or dual language programs.
- Engage families in decision-making about their individual child’s ELL progress and MLL service options.
- Establish partnerships with community organizations that have expertise, trusted connections with the communities represented by the school’s families, or can provide resources to families. Leverage these partnerships to help schools better understand families and connect them to appropriate community and school resources.
- Provide multilingual staff who can interpret for families at the front office, at meetings about their children (e.g., IEP meetings and parent-teacher conferences), and at school-wide or SAU-wide meetings (e.g., school board meetings and open houses).

Go to Appendix D for a list of resources and organizations that support families of multilingual learners.





Chapter 5

Developing a Family Engagement Strategy

The following nine steps help schools develop an effective family engagement strategy (Maine Department of Health and Human Services, 2025a). It is important to note that these steps are not a progression and often occur in tandem with one another.

- Establish trusting relationships with families
- Develop family engagement opportunities
- Assess organizational readiness
- Create a compensation policy
- Establish clear roles and responsibilities
- Develop two-way communication protocols
- Provide training and build capacity
- Create a feedback and evaluation system
- Institutionalize family engagement

Establishing Trusting Relationships with Families

Strong family engagement is built on a foundation of trust (Mapp & Bergman, 2019). Building relationships grounded in trust starts with connecting and valuing families' insights into their children, and building consistency between home and school. After all, families know their child's strengths, challenges, and lived experiences, while schools provide the context of classroom learning. When families and teachers have strong, trust-based relationships, they can help students connect more deeply to educational material and foster learning and success.

It's important to remember that the time it takes to nurture meaningful relationships differs for every individual and every family. Don't be discouraged if building trust takes longer than you think. Change happens at the speed of trust.

Example practices to build mutual respect and trust with families:

- Organize monthly breakfasts with the principal to learn about ongoing initiatives, share concerns, and brainstorm solutions.
- Facilitate in-person forums for school and SAU leaders to hear directly from parents.
- Follow up with survey respondents and share aggregate survey data.
- Reach out to families experiencing housing insecurity and connect them with the resources they need.
- Engage parent leaders in systemic practices, such as through school- or SAU-wide committees or event planning.
- Develop online resources for parents (e.g., a video on math strategies or a workshop on reading and writing expectations) so they know what their children are learning in the classroom and can help with homework.

These practices were shared by parents, community members, and educators who joined the CEFAM Advisory Committee (MAEC, 2025a).



Develop Family Engagement Opportunities

To increase partnerships with families, schools and SAUs can consider the following actions:

- **Create an advisory committee.** Organize a collaborative panel of school staff, administrators, and family and community members to share insights on educational initiatives and policies. Meetings should be designed so that all members can attend. Consider factors like the timing and location of meetings, offer a virtual participation option, and arrange for childcare and/or other forms of compensation.
- **Collaborate with parent-teacher organizations and associations.** PTAs/PTOs can be key for growing family engagement and identifying family-friendly activities that resonate with the community. Prioritize establishing goals, guided by family leaders, to support school needs.
- **Provide a family room, lending library, or resource center.** Families should have multi-modal access to information on meal distribution centers or food banks, unemployment services, childcare services, adult education and vocational training, housing and shelters, financial assistance, and recreational activities. If you have a family room or lending library, prioritize making the space warm and inviting, and encourage parents to share their own information in the resource center.
- **Host events outside of the school.** For many families, school has not been a safe place, and the setting may be triggering. Shared community spaces like libraries, community centers, and playgrounds may be more accessible and feel safer to many families. Ask families which locations work for them, rather than assuming that the school is the best option.
- **Establish regular family education opportunities.** Offer resources, sessions, and support on parenting, academic support, or other requested topics. You can offer sessions through a school newsletter, social media, in-person training, or virtual or recorded workshops. Prioritize accessibility needs, including by offering closed captioning, interpretation, large-print materials, and assistance with transportation and childcare.
- **Encourage opportunities for classroom or lunch visits and volunteering.** Invite families to visit during the school day or to volunteer outside of school hours to foster direct engagement, gain firsthand knowledge of school-based instruction, and build stronger connections between teachers and families.



- **Offer school tours.** While open houses are a great way for parents to see the school and make an initial connection, they can be overwhelming for families. Offer smaller, more personal tours during set times of the day and allow parents time to ask questions. School tours can be led by school administrators, family engagement coordinators, other school staff, or parents of other students. For a higher level of engagement, teachers may want to make a personal phone call or a video meet-and-greet to introduce themselves.
- **Show support and appreciation.** Communicate positive news often so that communication with families isn't limited to when problems arise. Consider sending "good news notes" to share information with families about specific skills or behaviors, or "thank you" cards, created by students, to express respect and appreciation.

Assess Organizational Readiness

A system that is ready for effective family engagement has inclusive policies, trained staff, and resources that reflect the diversity of the community it serves. There are also protocols to support two-way communication, so families can easily share feedback and influence decisions. With these elements in place, systems can build trust and move beyond transactional interactions to authentic collaboration.

Family engagement assessment tools help schools and SAUs evaluate the fairness and inclusivity of their current practices. They can help establish a clear understanding of what meaningful family engagement looks like and encourage reflection on whether policies and procedures align with community needs. The assessment process requires honest reflection on whether families feel valued and respected, and are supported in participating as partners in their child's education and well-being.

Go to Appendix E for a list of assessments to examine organizational readiness.



Create a Compensation Policy

Family engagement is a labor of love, but it's still labor. Everyone devoting time, expertise, and lived experience to the work should be compensated for their efforts. A clear, transparent policy establishes consistency and fairness for family partners. To compensate families participating in school leadership roles, consider the following actions:

- Build realistic compensation into your budget, including stipends, reimbursements, or hiring family partners as staff.
- Develop a consistent mechanism to reimburse family leaders for their time and other costs they incur, including travel, childcare, and lost wages.
- Create a Family Partnership Directory so family leaders can share their interests, skills, and availability. Consider including a section for agencies or organizations to issue a request for family partners to participate in specific activities.



How do I create a Family Partnership Directory?

The Maine CDC has developed a Family Partnership Directory Form for family leaders who want to offer their services, as well as an example for professionals seeking family members (Maine Department of Health and Human Services, 2025c):

- **Application for Family Partner** (Maine CDC). Available at <https://gateway.maine.gov/redcap/surveys/?s=3CHTCMJHXPY8HW7>
- **Organization Request for Family Partner Form** (Maine CDC). Available at <https://gateway.maine.gov/redcap/surveys/?s=3XY3NMDX49X3X4JT>

Establish Clear Roles and Responsibilities

Family engagement is a team effort, and teams work best when expectations are transparent and roles are clearly defined (NAFSCE, 2022). Outlining responsibilities is key to helping families and school staff understand how they contribute to family engagement work in advisory boards, meeting planning, policy development, and so forth. Consider the following actions to establish clear roles and responsibilities between families and schools:

- Schedule regular check-ins to review roles and responsibilities and to assess if all partners are satisfied with the process.
- Provide families and staff with the information, resources, and support they need to participate meaningfully, including stipends, mentoring, or training.

- Define the roles and responsibilities of families and staff early in the engagement process. Consider developing a Family Partnership Agreement or School-Parent Compact that spells out roles and responsibilities between schools and the families they serve, and serves as a reference if any questions arise. These forms are required for Title I schools.



Resources to support the development of a Family Partnership Agreement:

- **School-Parent Compact** (Maine Department of Education). Available at https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/ESEA%20-%20B12%20Title%20I%20School-Parent%20Compact%20-%206.8.2026_0.pdf
- **Ten Easy Steps to Success** (Connecticut School-Family-Community Partnerships). Available at <https://ctschoollparentcompact.org/videos/>
- **Sample Compact** (Connecticut School-Family-Community Partnerships). Available at <https://ctschoollparentcompact.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Sample-Compact-rev5-13-1.pdf>

Develop Two-Way Communication Protocols

Strong family engagement depends on transparent, open, and accessible communication between families and staff. It's key that families stay informed and share their perspectives, and that staff learn about students' home lives and share relevant information about students' academic and social-emotional progress. Transparent communication ensures that all families have equal access to information and feel valued as true partners. Consider the following actions to develop two-way communication protocols:



- Offer multiple communication channels (e.g., meetings, surveys, digital platforms) for families to share their needs and concerns.
- Ask families which communication channels work best for them (e.g., texts, phone calls, in-person meetings).
- Poll families and staff to find meeting times that work, and provide virtual or recorded options for those who cannot attend in person.
- Publish school communication plans for different issues.
- Prioritize accessibility and provide information in plain, jargon-free language.

- Ensure staff have the time, resources, and information they need to fully participate in meetings and to communicate clearly about new family engagement policies or practices.
- Schedule regular updates and feedback loops to keep families informed on school actions. They should have clear pathways to share concerns, ideas, and questions.
- Assume positive intentions. It can be difficult to reach and build relationships with families for many reasons: some parents work multiple jobs, there are complicated family dynamics, contact information needs to be updated, and insecure documentation status can make families hesitant to interact with schools, among other reasons. Avoid blaming or assuming the worst, and commit to the time and effort needed to build the relationship.

Prioritize accessible communication

Communication that is convenient and easy is essential for ensuring that every family can engage meaningfully with the school community. To effectively reach the entire school community, teachers and school administrators must recognize the varied needs of families and proactively reduce barriers to participation.

- Address technology gaps by offering low-tech options, such as printed newsletters, phone calls, or community bulletin boards, alongside digital tools.
- Avoid educational jargon and acronyms. When you need to use technical language, explain the terms clearly and use examples.
- Honor home languages by translating written materials and providing professional interpreters for meetings. Do not rely on students or untrained staff to act as interpreters for family members.
- Ensure that communication practices reflect the cultural norms and values of the families that the school serves.

Where do we start?

Establishing two-way communication begins with listening. Schools should first learn what works best for families and build systems that reflect their preferences and needs. An effective way to begin involving families in school matters is to ask families their preferences for communication and involvement. School-wide surveys are also a great way to learn what families want and need from their school community.

Communication methods that work for Maine families:

- Email
- Text message
- In-person meetings
- Flyers/newsletters
- Apps: TalkingPoints, Reach My Teach

These methods were shared by parents, community members, and educators who joined the CEFAM Advisory Committee.



Remember: two-way communication doesn't just mean receiving feedback from families. Educators should share with families what they learned from surveys or conversations and explain how the school is responding. Be sure to pay attention to who is not participating in surveys and conversations, and develop a strategy to encourage participation across all demographic groups.

Surveys and conversations are just the beginning of family engagement. The real measure of success is how schools act on the information they receive to create a culture of trust and partnership.



Educators can use the following survey examples as starting points with their community:

- **Family Engagement Assessment Tool (MAEC).** Available at <https://maec.org/feat>
- **Family Engagement Surveys and Checklists** (Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center). Available at <https://ohiofamiliesengage.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Family-Surveys-Oct-2023.pdf>

Feel free to create surveys that work for your communities. Don't worry about making it perfect - taking one small step to gather feedback is a step in the right direction.

Provide Training and Build Capacity

To create meaningful, balanced partnerships, both families and staff need to have the skills to collaborate effectively. Training builds confidence, strengthens cultural competency, and ensures that all leaders contribute to developing effective solutions. Consider the following actions to provide training and build capacity:

- Ask each classroom teacher to designate a family partner to represent the class for the school year. Provide consistent feedback from family partners, training opportunities, and discussions on how best to communicate with other classroom families.
- Ask family partners and staff what training or professional development they would find helpful.



- Encourage joint workshops that bring staff and families together to learn and develop solutions collaboratively.
- Offer training programs, workshops, and other skill-building opportunities for families and staff. Families should receive training on topics such as navigating agency processes and advocacy; staff should learn about cultural competency, family-centered practices, and other related topics.
- Publicly acknowledge the contributions of family leaders to system-level work.
- Provide regular training for professionals to build their Family Engagement Core Competencies as part of school-wide in-service professional development (NAFSCE, 2022; [Appendix F](#)).



Create a Feedback and Evaluation System

Ongoing feedback and evaluation is key to know if your family engagement efforts are meeting the goals that you set. A strong evaluation system enables schools and SAUs to measure the effectiveness of family engagement initiatives and identify areas of improvement. Combine qualitative and quantitative methods when collecting data to better understand the impact the opportunities have on families and student outcomes. Consider the following actions to create a feedback and evaluation system:

- Conduct a pre-assessment to understand families' and staff's goals.
- Regularly offer surveys, interviews, and open forums to gauge satisfaction and identify areas for improvement.
- Document the contributions of family leaders and staff in strengthening initiatives and improving family engagement.
- Use assessment tools to ensure that proposed policies are aligned with community needs.



Essential evaluation questions for reflection on family engagement practices:

- What are the desired outcomes of your family engagement plan?
- How did your program/service outcomes change as a result of partnering with families?
- How do you measure family and organization agency satisfaction with engagement?
- How do you measure the effectiveness of the practice?
- How do you measure success and barriers?

Institutionalize Family Engagement

Sustainable engagement requires more than one-time efforts; it must be embedded into organizational culture and policy. Institutionalizing these approaches ensures that families stay central to shaping systems that serve them. Consider the following actions to institutionalize family engagement in your education community:

- Create dedicated roles or offices dedicated to family engagement.
- Establish policies requiring family representation in all major decision-making processes.
- Embed family engagement training in staff onboarding activities.
- Establish family participation and compensation policies.
- Conduct community asset mapping or identify community resource directories, and make sure all practitioners know how to access that information.



Resources to facilitate community asset mapping:

- **Connect to Community Assets With Resource Mapping** (Brailey & Webster, 2025). Available at <https://www.naesp.org/resource/connect-to-community-assets-with-resource-mapping/>
- **Overview of Creating an Asset Map** (Institute of Education Sciences, 2025). Available at https://ies.ed.gov/sites/default/files/rel-appalachia/document/2025/01/RELAP_3.3.1.8_03_Handout-1_Creating-an-Asset-Map.pdf
- **4 Best Practices for Connecting Families to Community Resources** (ParentPowered). Available at <https://parentpowered.com/blog/trauma-informed-education/connect-families-to-resources/>



Conclusion

If you and your team want to create or deepen your engagement with families, be gentle with yourself. It takes time to create meaningful policies and protocols, and you will learn what works and what doesn't as you go. Programs have varying levels of capacity for this work, and trying to do it all without the right tools, funding, and buy-in can be very frustrating. Programs and services also change over time, and your family engagement needs may change as well. But you're not alone: the resources and organizations shared in this framework are here to support your work.

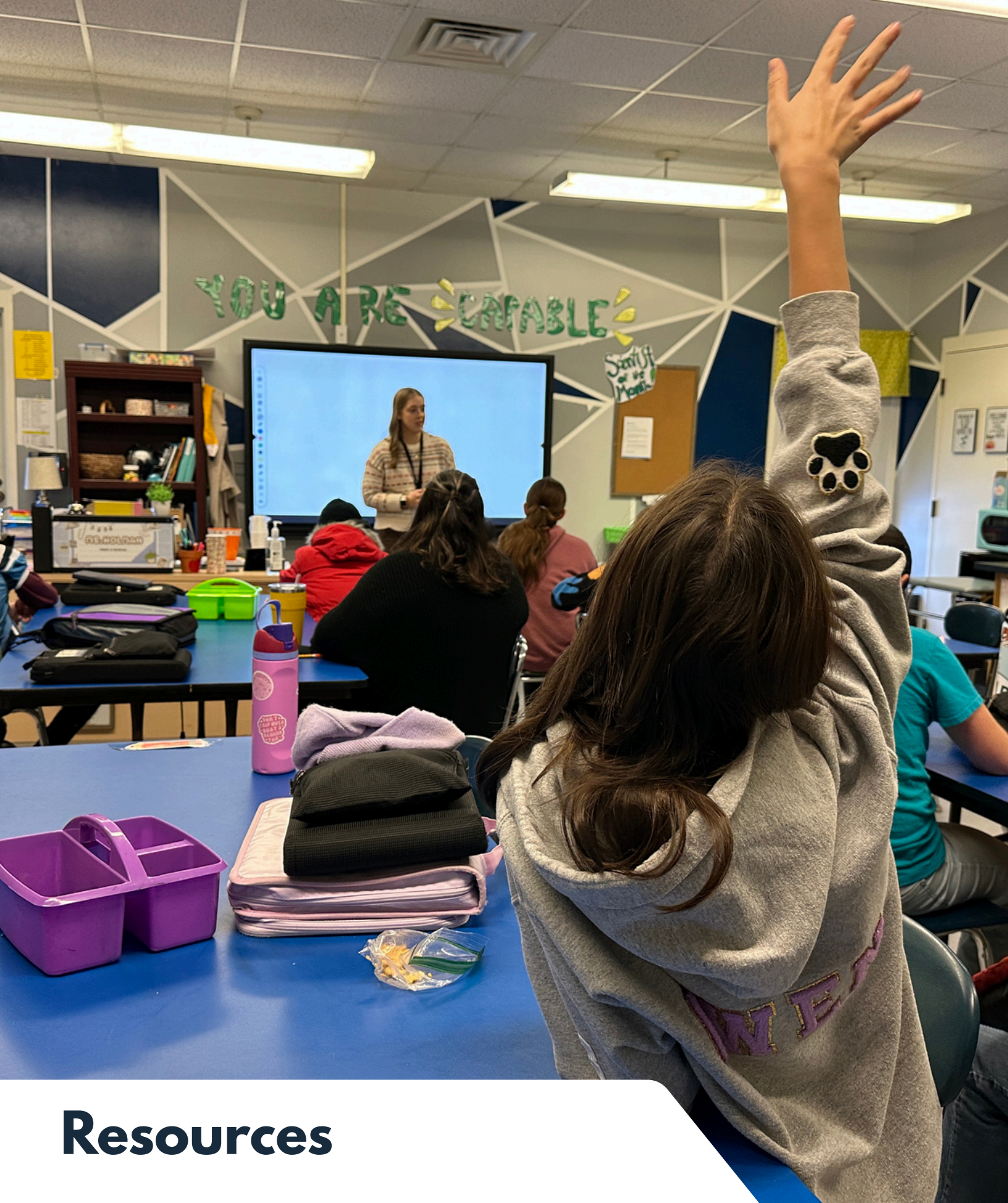
What is most important is to be genuine in your interactions with family partners, curious about their perspectives, and as transparent as possible about yours. Education and healthcare systems focused on building strong family engagement should continue to prioritize equity, trust, inclusion, and accessibility. This involves recognizing families as equal partners, fostering meaningful relationships through transparency and respect, and tailoring engagement strategies to cultural and geographic needs. To sustain these partnerships, child- and family-serving systems must also invest in appropriate training, provide necessary tools and resources, and bridge gaps between communities.

Weaving family partnership into your program development, activities, and evaluation can result in positive outcomes such as more responsive services, more informed decision-making, program innovation, greater relevance, more effectively allocated resources, easier reporting, and more. Families make up the fabric of our communities, and when an organization elevates family voice into programs and services, communities are stronger, families are better off, and children succeed. We are all in this together.

Contact Information:

Email: DOESchoolandStudentSupports@maine.gov

Access contact information for additional Maine Department of Education offices in [Appendix G](#).



Resources

Appendix A: Ideas for Home Activities

Activities with Pre-K Students

Maine Parent Federation (2026)

- Routinely discuss the different colors of food on your child’s plates at mealtime. On their next visit to the grocery store, spend some time with your child in the produce section, looking for different colors of fruits and vegetables. Take a picture of food that is your child’s favorite color!
- Point out traffic signs on your way home and talk to your child about what the signs mean. They may want to take a picture of an interesting sign and share it with their teacher.
- Practice using key science words during activities, like “experiment,” “observe,” “hypothesize,” and “analyze.” For example, try floating various objects in the bathtub and ask your child to “observe” which object is heaviest.
- Make counting part of your routine. For example, how many stairs does your child go up or down to reach their home? How many buses, trains, or trucks do they see on the way home?
- If a snowstorm is in the forecast, measure the number of inches of snow that falls near your home with your child.
- Read with your child at home. Whether families are reading a classic novel or fairy tales before bed, reading aloud to children can significantly increase vocabulary and comprehension, foster imagination and creativity, and build a deeper connection between parents and children.

Activities with Elementary School-Age Children

Maren (2024)

- Practice number placement by showing your child the numbers in the addresses listed on your mail. Ask them, “What is the biggest number you can make using all these numbers?” Help them when needed.
- Challenge your child to create an instrument with objects around the house. Can they make a wind chime using empty bottles? Encouraging creative use of everyday objects boosts their critical thinking skills.
- When your child faces a math challenge, guide them in breaking down the problem. Prompt them to outline the steps they need to take to reach a solution. Ask questions like, “What’s the first step?” and “What comes next?” This approach nurtures problem-solving skills that apply to academics and real-life situations.

- Give your child helping jobs around the house to build their sense of belonging and community in the family. For example, after a meal, ask your child to clear the table or wipe it down with a cloth.
- Before a school project, sit down with your child and compile a list of everything they need. This activity fosters independence and develops important executive functioning skills.

Activities with Middle School-Age Children

Maren (2024), Maine Parent Federation (2026)

- Challenge your child to find an interesting word each day. Explore its meaning together. This activity fosters curiosity and a love for learning while expanding their communication skills.
- Share family recipes with your child to turn meal preparation into a bonding experience. Take it a step further by having your child document the cooking process. To promote active learning, let them take on the role of the teacher and explain a new recipe to you step-by-step.
- Friends can be one of the most important relationships in a middle schooler's life. Get curious about your child's friendships. After school, ask your child questions like "Who are some friends you like hanging out with?" or "What do you do together?" These inquiries build trust between you and your child, while you learn about their friends. Talking about friendships helps middle schoolers navigate the ups and downs that naturally come with relationships. If friendships get tough, signal to your child that you're there to listen. It's ok, too, if your child doesn't want to talk – invite them to write you a note to tell you about the situation.
- Establish a family book club by choosing a book to read together. Gather periodically to discuss the book's themes, characters, and what each family member learned. This intellectual activity promotes insightful conversations and shared learning.

Activities with Middle or High School-Age Children

Maine Parent Federation (2026)

- Explore local volunteer opportunities that parents and teens can participate in together. This can strengthen family bonds and have a positive impact on the community.
- Initiate discussions centered around solving problems collaboratively. Tackle everyday challenges your teen faces in the household, like organizing spaces, or delve into broader global issues such as hunger. These conversations encourage critical thinking and meaningful exchanges.

- Encourage your teen to envision their future in 20, 30, or 50 years. Creating vision boards or setting long-term goals together can be both enjoyable and motivating. Provide support as they work towards their ambitions.
- Plan weekend getaways or day trips. Share local events with families. Involve your teen in the planning process to ensure their interests are considered, fostering a sense of involvement and adventure.
- Embark on a journey of adopting new healthy habits together. Whether it's regular exercise, meditation, or keeping a gratitude journal, cultivating mindfulness and stress-management skills contributes to lifelong well-being.

Appendix B: Tech Tools

Maine Parent Federation (2024)

Tech tools to disseminate information

- District, school, classroom webpages and groups
- Email groups
- Facebook group pages
- Google Tools: Google Drive, Google Docs, Google Classroom, and Google Voice
- Call messaging systems or mass communication alerts, for example: onecallnow.com, which includes texting

Video conferencing tools

- Zoom
- Facebook Live
- Skype
- FaceTime
- GoToMeeting
- Webex
- Google Hangouts
- Google Chat
- Free Conference Call (freeconferencecallhd.com)

Social media platforms and/or technology

- School district mobile app
- WhatsApp
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Remind101

Tools to gather input and information from families

- Google Forms
- Google Docs
- Facebook survey
- Survey Monkey
- Remind101 App

Tools for running productive group meetings and events

- Google Calendar
- Remind101 App

Tools for scheduling group meetings

- Doodle
- Google Forms
- Signupgenius.com

Appendix C: Supporting Students with Special Needs

4 Ways Students Can Take an Active Role in Their IEP Meetings (Nieves, 2021). Available at

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/4-ways-students-can-take-active-role-their-iep-meetings>

A short article on how students can take a more active role in the meeting and with their IEP.

Access Maine (InforME). Available at <https://www.accessmaine.org>

An online resource guide with information to connect people living in Maine to public programs, services, and other resources that are available to provide support. The menu item “Health Resources” includes a page on “Special Health Needs of Children.”

Maine Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) (Maine Parent Federation). Available at

<https://www.mpf.org/programs/pti/>

The Maine PTI provides parents of children with disabilities with training and information to help their children lead productive, independent lives. Contact at parentconnect@mpf.org.

Multilingual Learners with Disabilities (Maine Department of Education). Available at

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/multilinguallearner/resources/MLdisabilities>

A list of resources to support students with disabilities, including professional learning for educators and Maine’s first guidance manual on identifying and serving multilingual learners with disabilities.

Special Services & Inclusive Education Resources for Families & Schools (Maine Department of Education). Available at <https://www.maine.gov/doe/specialservices/resources>

A list of resources for educators, administrators, families, and caregivers to support students with disabilities, including IEP-related forms, information about the Special Education Surrogate Parent Program, and special education glossaries in various languages.

Appendix D: Resources for Multilingual Learners (MLLs)

21st Century Learning at Home: A Guide for Families and Caregivers of English Learners to Support Project-Based Learning at Home (MAEC). Available at https://maec.org/learning_at_home/

A guide for families and caregivers to support and lead English Learners through activities that promote communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking while engaging with a child's culture, family background, and home languages.

Colorín Colorado. Available at <https://www.colorincolorado.org>

A bilingual site in English and Spanish for educators and families of English language learners that offers free multimedia materials such as classroom videos, toolkits, research-based articles, multilingual tip sheets, newsletters, featured books and authors, and social media.

Equal Education Opportunities for English Learners (U.S. Department of Education). Available at <https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/civil-rights-laws/race-color-and-national-origin-discrimination/race-color-and-national-origin-discrimination-key-issues/equal-education-opportunities-english>

Fact sheets and resources explaining the rights of English Learners at school.

Family Engagement Resources (WIDA Consortium). Available at <https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/engagement>

Maine is a member of the WIDA Consortium, an organization dedicated to the research, design, and implementation of a high-quality, culturally and linguistically appropriate system to support MLLs in K-12 contexts. This page outlines resources for educators supporting MLLs and their families.

Multilingual Learners (Maine Department of Education). Available at <https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/multilinguallearner>

Resources, guidance, and professional learning for Maine families and educators to support MLLs in school. The Multilingual Learner Data Dashboard is useful for accessing up-to-date statistics on MLLs in Maine schools.

Appendix E: Assessments to Examine Organizational Readiness

The following readiness assessments can help schools and SAUs identify bright spots in their current engagement practices and opportunities to integrate family engagement into school operational systems. Schools and SAUs should use assessment results to prioritize necessary capacity-building before launching initiatives.

Continuous Improvement for Educational Excellence (MAEC). Available at ci4equity.org.

CI4E is an approach that reframes the traditional continuous improvement process to address disparities and consider power dynamics in decision-making. The CI4E Hub offers questionnaires and resources for school teams aiming to create inclusive cultures.

Engaging Parents, Developing Leaders: A Self-Assessment and Planning for Nonprofits and Schools (The Annie E. Casey Foundation). Available at <https://www.aecf.org/resources/engaging-parents-developing-leaders>.

An assessment and planning tool to help nonprofits evaluate their parent engagement efforts and chart a path toward deeper partnerships with parents and caregivers.

Equity Audit (MAEC). Available at <http://www.maec.org/equity-audit/>

A tool for SAUs, schools, and teachers to critically examine policies, programs, and practices that directly or indirectly impact students or staff relative to aspects of identity.

Family Engagement Assessment Tool (MAEC). Available at <http://www.maec.org/feat/>

Like the Equity Audit, the FEAT supports SAUs and schools to critically examine their policies, programs, and practices, with a specific focus on family-school relationships.

Family Engagement in Systems Assessment Tools (Family Voices). Available at <https://familyvoices.org/fesat/>

An assessment for child- and family-serving organizations to use to plan, assess, and improve family engagement.

Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through Guide (Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center). Available at <https://ohiofamiliesengage.osu.edu/resources/family-friendly-partnership-school-walk-through/>

A document that explains how teams can conduct a tour and evaluation of your school building.

Appendix F: NAFSCE Family Engagement Core Competencies

The Family Engagement Core Competencies, developed by the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE), are based on decades of research on effective family engagement, a review of 15 sets of professional standards, and feedback from educators, families, and teacher educators. They can serve as a guide for anyone providing professional preparation, in-service training, mentoring, or coaching.

We invite you to use the Core Competencies to identify gaps or areas for strengthening within existing training or to serve as a foundation for developing new training. Individual practitioners can also use the self-reflection tool within the Core Competencies to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement.

Visit <https://nafsce.org/page/corecompetencies> to learn more about the NAFSCE Family Engagement Core Competencies.

Appendix G: Key Maine Department of Education Offices

Several offices within the Maine Department of Education can support educators, families, and others in maximizing the use of this framework: the Maine School Safety Center, the Office of School & Student Supports, the Office of Teaching & Learning, the Office of Special Services and Inclusive Education, and the Office of Federal Programs. There are specialists in each office who can support educators, families, and students with their needs in and out of school.

We invite you to bookmark this site and visit often: <https://www.maine.gov/doe/offices>.

Maine School Safety Center

The experts at the Maine School Safety Center provide training, guidance, and ongoing support for stakeholders across the state. Their services take a holistic approach to safety to ensure that all community partners work together to provide safe schools. Services include training on school safety and security, site assessment, emergency management, Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM), Restorative Practices, and transportation safety resources.

Visit <https://www.maine.gov/doe/index.php/safety/contact> to learn more about the team and contact team members.

Office of School & Student Supports

This office strives to ensure that Maine schools are inclusive, healthy, safe, and supportive communities where every student thrives. The team endeavors to coordinate resources and programs that promote equitable, psycho-socially, physically, and environmentally healthy school communities for all. Staff focuses on physical and mental health in schools, school climate and culture, community schools, and school approval and enrollment.

Visit <https://www.maine.gov/doe/schoolsupports> to access resources and contact the Office of School & Student Supports Director.

Office of Federal Programs

This office manages funding received by the Maine Department of Education from the US Department of Education for state assessment, child nutrition, ESEA programs (Titles I, II, III, IV, and V), and Emergency Federal Relief. In collaboration with other offices and teams across the Maine DOE, this office seeks to support the coordination of funding sources to be “braided or blended” to support student outcomes.

Visit <https://www.maine.gov/doe/federalprograms> to learn more about the federal programs and contact the Director.

Office of Teaching & Learning

This office aims to develop, nurture, and foster educational innovation and new ideas at all levels of public-school organizations. They support educators, school leaders, and policymakers to advance PK-12 education through innovation in teaching and learning that improves education for all learners.

Visit <https://www.maine.gov/doe/teachingandlearning> to access resources for educators and contact the Chief Teaching & Learning Officer.

Office of Special Services & Inclusive Education

This office is dedicated to improving results for students with disabilities by providing leadership, support, and oversight to local education agencies. They are committed to ensuring the provision of a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for children with disabilities (ages 3 to 22), as well as early intervention services to infants and toddlers (birth through age 2). Their work is accomplished through collaboration with families, SAUs, public and private agencies, and other programs.

Visit <https://www.maine.gov/doe/specialservices> to access resources and data on special services in Maine and contact the State Director of Special Services, Birth to 22.



References

Access Maine. (2022). Homepage. InforME. <https://www.accessmaine.org/>

Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2016). Engaging Parents, Developing Leaders. <https://www.aecf.org/resources/engaging-parents-developing-leaders>

Brailey, K. & Webster, J. (2025). Connect to Community Assets With Resource Mapping. NAESP Principal Magazine. <https://www.naesp.org/resource/connect-to-community-assets-with-resource-mapping/>

Colorín Colorado. (n.d.). Homepage. <https://www.colorincolorado.org/>

Connecticut State Department of Education. (2015a). Sample Compact. <https://ctschoollparentcompact.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Sample-Compact-rev5-13-1.pdf>

Connecticut State Department of Education. (2015b). Ten Easy Steps to Success Videos.

<https://ctschoollparentcompact.org/videos/>

Dworetzky, B., Hoover, C. G., & Walker, D. K. (2023). Family Engagement at the Systems Level: A Framework for Action. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 27(6).

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369200284_Family_Engagement_at_the_Systems_Level_A_Framework_for_Action

Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Sheldon, S. B., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., Van Voorhis, F. J., Martin, C. S., Thomas, B. G., Greenfeld, M. D., Hutchins, D. J., & Williams, K. J. (2019). *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*, Fourth Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.; National Network of Partnership Schools, 6 Types of Involvement: Keys to Successful Partnerships, <https://nnps.jhucos.com/nnps-model/school-model/six-types-of-involvement-keys-to-successful-partnerships/>

Family Voices. (2024). Closing the Feedback Loop. <https://familyvoices.org/wp-uploads/2024/07/Feedback-Loop-Tip-Sheet.pdf>

Family Voices. (2025). Family Engagement in Systems Assessment Tools.

<https://familyvoices.org/fesat/>

Hanover Research. (2023). Engaging families and communities in K–12 education.

<https://www.hanoverresearch.com/reports-and-briefs/k-12-education/engaging-families-and-communities-in-k-12-education/>

Hart, H., Young, C., Chen, A., Zou, A., & Allensworth, E. M. (2020). *Supporting school improvement: Early findings from reexamination of the Essentials survey*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Consortium on School Research.

Hoque, F. (2024). Shared Decision-Making in Patient Care: Advantages, Barriers and Potential Solutions. *Hospital Practice Management*, 3(4), 13-15. <https://bhm.scholasticahq.com/article/122787-shared-decision-making-in-patient-care-advantages-barriers-and-potential-solutions>

Institute of Education Sciences. (2025). Overview of Creating an Asset Map. REL Appalachia.

https://ies.ed.gov/sites/default/files/rel-appalachia/document/2025/01/RELAP_3.3.1.8_03_Handout-1_Creating-an-Asset-Map.pdf

Madalyn, M. (2025). 6 Principles of Great Family Engagement. ParentPowered.

<https://parentpowered.com/blog/family-engagement/family-engagement-program/>

- Maine Department of Education. (2025a). 15-Minute Attendance Team Agenda Template. <https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/Student%20Supports%20-%2015-Minute%20Attendance%20Team%20Agenda%20Template%20-%2006.11.2025.pdf>
- Maine Department of Education. (2025b). ESEA Monitoring Factsheet: School-Parent Compact. https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/ESEA%20-%20B12%20Title%20I%20School-Parent%20Compact%20-%2006.8.2026_0.pdf
- Maine Department of Education. (2025c). MTSS Framework. <https://www.maine.gov/doe/mtss/framework>
- Maine Department of Education. (2025d). Resources for Families & Schools: Special Services & Inclusive Education. <https://www.maine.gov/doe/specialservices/resources>
- Maine Department of Education (2026a). Maine Engagement Attendance Center. <https://www.maine.gov/doe/meac>
- Maine Department of Education (2026b). Multilingual Learners. <https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/multilinguallearner>
- Maine Department of Education (2026c). Multilingual Learners with Disabilities. <https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/multilinguallearner/resources/MLdisabilities>
- Maine Department of Education (2026d). Special Services & Inclusive Education Resources for Families & Schools. <https://www.maine.gov/doe/specialservices/resources>
- Maine Department of Education (2026e). Student Attendance Tracking Tool. <https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/Student%20Supports%20-%20MEAC%20Attendance%20Tracking%20Tool%20-%2011.25.2025.pdf>
- Maine Department of Education & Count Me In. (n.d.). Attendance Support Plan. <https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/2024-06/Student%20Supports%20-%20Attendance%20Support%20Plan%20for%20Schools%20-%2006.7.2024.pdf>
- Maine Department of Health and Human Services. (2025a). Family Partnership Framework. Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/healthy-living/maternal-and-child-health/special-health-care-needs/care-coordination/family-voice>

- Maine Department of Health and Human Services. (2025b). Family Voices. Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/healthy-living/maternal-and-child-health/special-health-care-needs/care-coordination/family-voice>
- Maine Parent Federation. (2024). Family Engagement: A Collaboration between Providers, Educators, and Families. <https://www.mpf.org/download/family-engagement/>
- Maine Parent Federation. (2026). Parent Training & Information: PTI Centers. <https://www.mpf.org/programs/pti/>
- Mapp, K. L. & Bergman, E. (2019). Dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships (Version 2). www.dualcapacity.org
- Mapp, K. L., Henderson, A., Cuevas, S., Franco, M., & Ewert, S. (2022). *Everyone Wins! The Evidence for Family-School Partnerships and Implications for Practice*. Scholastic. <https://shop.scholastic.com/teachers-ecommerce/teacher/books/everyone-wins-9781338586688.html>
- Maren, M. (2024). Catalyze Student Learning with Family Engagement Activities at Home. ParentPowered. <https://parentpowered.com/blog/family-engagement/family-engagement-activities-at-home/>
- Melz, H. (2021). Evaluating family engagement in child welfare: A primer for evaluators on key issues in definition, measurement, and outcomes. Children’s Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/evaluating-family-engagement.pdf>
- Michigan Department of Education, Office of Great Start. (2022). Essential Practices for Successful Child Transitions: A companion resource in support of the Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Birth to Kindergarten. Michigan Department of Education. <https://www.michigan.gov/mileap/-/media/Project/Websites/mileap/Documents/Early-Childhood-Education/gsrp/standards/MI-Tip-Sheet-Supporting-Child-Transitions.pdf>
- Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc. (2022). Equity Audit. <http://www.maec.org/equity-audit/>
- Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc. (2026). Continuous Improvement for Equity. <https://ci4equity.org/>

- Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc. (2022). 21st-Century Learning at Home: A Guide for Families and Caregivers of English Learners to Support Project-Based Learning at Home. https://maec.org/learning_at_home/
- Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc. (2023). Building Leaders: An Educator’s Guide to Family Leadership. <https://maec.org/building-leaders/>
- Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc. (2025a). CEFAM - Strengths-Based Data Collection. Bethesda, MD. February 2025.
- Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc. (2025b). Centering Family Voices Across Maine’s Public Schools: Insights from the 2024-2025 Maine Family Engagement Needs Assessment (MEFENA). <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2f23b76e6534481cbb1013b96a2b544e>
- Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc. (2025c). Family Engagement Assessment Tool. <https://maec.org/feat/>
- Minshew, A. (2024). How parent involvement leads to Student Success. Waterford. <https://www.waterford.org/blog/how-parent-involvement-leads-to-student-success/>
- National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE). (2022). Family Engagement Core Competencies: A Body of Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Family-Facing Professionals. <https://nafsce.org/page/corecompetencies>
- National Parent Teacher Association. (2021). National Standards for Family-School Partnerships. <https://www.pta.org/home/run-your-pta/family-school-partnerships>
- Nieves, K. (2021). 4 Ways Students Can Take an Active Role in Their IEP Meetings. *Edutopia*. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/4-ways-students-can-take-active-role-their-iep-meetings>
- Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center. (2023). Family Engagement Surveys & Checklists. The Ohio State University. <https://ohiofamiliesengage.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Family-Surveys-Oct-2023.pdf>
- Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center. (2025). Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through Guide. <https://ohiofamiliesengage.osu.edu/resources/family-friendly-partnership-school-walk-through/>

- ParentPowered Team. (n.d.). 4 Best Practices for Connecting Families to Community Resources. <https://parentpowered.com/blog/trauma-informed-education/connect-families-to-resources/>
- Ross, E. (2023). The case for strong family and community engagement in schools. Harvard Graduate School of Education. <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/23/03/case-strong-family-and-community-engagement-schools>
- Shaikh, H. & Honig, R. (2025). Culturally Responsive Family Engagement. ParentPowered. <https://parentpowered.com/blog/education-equity/culturally-responsive-family-engagement/>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2025). Equal Education Opportunities for English Learners. <https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/civil-rights-laws/race-color-and-national-origin-discrimination/race-color-and-national-origin-discrimination-key-issues/equal-education-opportunities-english>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. (2018). Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework. <https://headstart.gov/school-readiness/article/parent-family-community-engagement-pfce-framework>
- WIDA Consortium. (n.d.). Family Engagement Resources. <https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/engagement>

Photo Credits

- Cover** Photo by Emma Bauso / Pexels
- i** Photo by monkeybusinessimages / iStock
- 1** Photo by shaunl / Getty Images
- 4** Photo by the Maine Department of Education (DOE)
- 7** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 9** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 12 (top)** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 12 (bottom)** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 13** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 14** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 15 (top)** Photo by Vitaly Gariev / Pexels
- 15 (middle)** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 15 (bottom)** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 16** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 18** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 19** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 20** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 21** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 22** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 23** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 24** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 25** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 26** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 28** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 30** Photo by Hugo Nájera, MAEC
- 31** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 33** Photo by David Fuentes / Adobe Stock
- 35** Photo by the Maine DOE
- 46** Photo by the Maine DOE