



CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Talk Tuesdays

Student Attendance, Engagement, and Support Series

August 10, 2021

★ Please sign-in using the chat - include your name, title, district/school or agency.



Developed by the CSDE in collaboration with SERC



***Notice: This meeting is
being recorded.***

Agenda

1. Welcome

Kari Sullivan Custer, Education Consultant, Attendance & Engagement, CSDE

2. What's New at CSDE and Partners

3. Beginning of the Year Relationship Building Tools

Dr. Judy Carson, Education Consultant, School-Family-Community Partnerships, CSDE

4. Upcoming Attendance & Engagement Meetings

Notice: This meeting is being recorded.



What's New at CSDE

August 9, 2021

- [District Behavioral Health Survey](#)
- [Special Education Recovery Funding](#)

August 5, 2021

- Reminder - [No-Cost Professional Development Opportunity: Ed Finance in 2021](#)
- [Reporting Summer School Data on the Public School Information System \(PSIS\)](#)

August 2, 2021

- [DPH Return to Service Guidance](#)
- [Summary of Education-Related Legislation Enacted in the 2021 Legislative Session and June Special Session of the Connecticut General Assembly](#)

July 28, 2021

- [K-6 Screening Testing Participation Survey](#) and [fact sheet](#)

July 26, 2021

- [Fall 2021 Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention](#) 

July 19, 2021

- [CSDE Guidance Regarding the Future of Remote Learning in Connecticut Schools](#) 



Legislative Update

Mental Health Wellness Days – Public Act 21-46, Section 19



Beginning school year 2021-22 and going forward, local and regional boards of education must provide students enrolled in kindergarten through Grade 12 the **opportunity to be absent from school for up to two mental health wellness days during the school year. The two mental health wellness days may not be taken consecutively.** This is in accordance with [Section 19 of Public Act 21-46](#), An Act Concerning Social Equity and the Health, Safety and Education of Children.



CT Attendance Awareness Campaign

In partnership with [Attendance Works](#), CSDE has created messaging materials, in English and Spanish, for Connecticut districts and schools to use in their own attendance awareness campaigns. All materials can be downloaded and branded with a district or school's logo. The resources include banners, parent handouts, posters and coloring pages. All resources are in PDF format. Find the materials on the Connecticut [Attendance Awareness Campaign webpage](#).



Banners

- Elementary [English](#) [Spanish](#)
- Secondary [English](#) [Spanish](#)

Parent Handouts

- Elementary [English](#) [Spanish](#)
- Secondary [English](#) [Spanish](#)

Posters [English](#) [Spanish](#)

Coloring Pages [English](#) [Spanish](#)



Attend Today Connecticut

Stay on Track with Good Attendance...

©Attendance Works

PRESCHOOLERS build skills and develop good habits for showing up on time	ELEMENTARY STUDENTS read well by the end of third grade	HIGH SCHOOLERS stay on track for graduation	COLLEGE STUDENTS earn their degrees	WORKERS succeed in their jobs
--	---	---	---	---

Too many absences—excused or unexcused—can keep students from succeeding in school and in life. How many are too many? 10% of the school year—that's 18 missed days or 2 days a month—can knock students off track.

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE>

#attendtodayCT

Attendance Works
Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence
www.attendanceworks.org



Parent Teacher Home Visits Training

August 18, 2021

10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Virtual Training via Zoom

REGISTER NOW

The research is clear - families are essential to student success. Therefore, the Parent-Teacher Training focuses on building the capacity of educators to build meaningful relationships with the families.

The PTHV Training prepares educators to conduct in-person home visits and virtual visits, giving schools and educators options to build and deepen relationships of trust with their students' families.

The training will prepare teachers and family engagement specialist to:

- Understand the PTHV model and why it is effective.
- Be prepared to do both in-person home visits and virtual bridge visits.
- Take next steps to launch PTHV visits.
- Have a date and plan for future action.
- Participants will also have the opportunity for connecting practice support session.

Who should attend?

Parents, Teachers, school administrators, family engagement liaisons, Title I Directors, and family engagement teams.



For additional information please visit the CT Family School Partnerships website: www.ct-fsp.org

Contact: Betsy LeBorjous at bleborjous@crec.org OR Mary Lou Molloy at mmolloy@crec.org

This training is funded by the USDE Statewide Family Engagement Center Grant. There is no fee to attend this training.

Priority will be given to Alliance School Districts and to National Network of Partnership Schools in CT.



[Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)



CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

SETTING THE STAGE FOR HIGH-IMPACT FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Beginning of the Year Relationship Building Tools

Judy Carson
Education Consultant
School-Family-Community Partnerships
Connecticut State Department of Education
judy.carson@ct.gov

Meeting the Moment

“States are revisiting what it means to have families engaged. The pandemic taught educators the need to be nimble, flexible, and meet families where they are, and that they couldn’t use the same strategies that were ineffective prior to the pandemic.”

Dr. Miguel Cardona
U.S. Secretary of Education

Students do better in school and in life when their families are engaged

Family engagement...

- Is associated with reduced drop-out rates and higher graduation rates.
- Leads to increased student achievement.
- Reduces absenteeism.
- Encourages students to have better attitudes towards learning.
- Leads to better social skills and less conduct problems.

Schools benefit from family engagement

Family engagement...

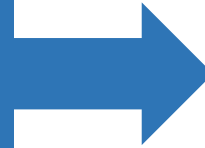
- Is associated with higher expectations.
- Can lead to better student-teacher relationships.
- Helps improve trust in schools.
- Leads to more cultural competence.

CT Definition and Framework for Family Engagement

Family engagement is

A full, equal and equitable partnership

- among families, educators and community partners
- to promote children's learning and development,
- from birth through college and career.



Indicators of Equitable Partnerships

- Build trust and respect
- Listen to Families: Two-way conversations
- Link family engagement to student learning
- Co-create culturally responsive practice
- Support parents as assets and leaders

Goal #1: Build Trusting, Respectful Relationships

Why: The level of **TRUST** between families and schools is an underlying predictor of student performance.

Proactive one-on-one contact with every family

- [Relationship Building Toolkit*](#)
- [Parent Teacher Home Visits](#)
- [Welcoming Schools](#)
- Communication & Translation

“The development of relational trust between home and school is key for any other partnership work to actually take place.”

*Dr. Karen Mapp
Harvard University*

Toolkits for Schools

Leader Actions



Academic Partnering Toolkit for teachers!

Linking to Learning



ACADEMIC PARTNERING COMPANION GUIDE For School Leaders

Trusting Relationships



BEGINNING OF YEAR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING A Strategy Guide for Educators



How Do Families Support Student Achievement?

All families deserve access to **INFORMATION** and **CONNECTIONS** to play these roles well.

Five Roles Families Play to Accelerate Student Learning



COMMUNICATE
HIGH EXPECTATIONS



MONITOR
THEIR CHILD'S PERFORMANCE



SUPPORT
LEARNING AT HOME



GUIDE
THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION



ADVOCATE
FOR THEIR CHILD

BEGINNING OF YEAR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

A Strategy Guide for Educators

In this toolkit, educators will find:



Guidance on making authentic **Welcome Calls** in any format.



Reasons to use **Partnered Communications** for beginning of the year relationship building.



Example prompts to create **Student + Family Questionnaires**.



Considerations and ideas for hosting **Community Building Meetings**, such as Back to School Night.

STRATEGY 1: WELCOME CALLS

STRATEGY 2: PARTNERED COMMUNICATIONS

- ✓ Prepare **before** the call
- ✓ Use trust building questions **during** the call
- ✓ Communicate **after** the call



[Welcome Call Planning Tool](#)

[Questions for Building Trust](#)

[Challenging Assumptions Reflections Tool](#)

More Suggestions and Tips

[Ongoing Communications Reflection Tool](#)

[Connecting with “Hard-to-Reach” Families](#)

[Family + Student Wellness Check-In](#)

Welcome Call Planning Tool

Use this table to plan your beginning of the year relationship-building communication. If these communications happen with a partner, be sure to note who will take the lead in each section.

Component	Talking Points	Notes
1. Introduce yourself (and your partner if applicable) and confirm that this is still a good time to talk.		
2. Outline – quickly – the agenda and goals of the call. Ask if there is anything the family would add.		
3. Share: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your background• Your interests• How excited you are to teach their child!		
4. Ask: see Questions for Trust Building		

Component	Talking Points	Notes
5. Share: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your hopes and dreams for their student• Your expectations for engagement during the year		
6. Ask how the family would like to stay in communication over the year and share all the possible ways they can connect with you.		
7. Share any critical school or district updates.		
8. Ask the family if they have any final questions or concerns they'd like to share.		

Ongoing Communications Reflection Tool

ONGOING COMMUNICATIONS REFLECTION TOOL				
Student Name	I know how to get in touch with this student's family.	I have pro-actively communicated with this student's family in the last 4 weeks.	I feel confident that this student's family is monitoring and supporting their child's learning at home.	I have a trusting relationship with this family.

Focus Students <i>Based on trends in the Reflection Tool tab, who do you need to prioritize?</i>	Action Plan <i>What steps will you take? By when?</i>



FAMILY + STUDENT WELLNESS CHECK-IN

A REAL Family Engagement Resource

First, **frame the purpose** of the call. Say:

*This is [your name], and I'm calling from [school]. I'm [student's name] teacher, and I'm calling to check in to see how you and [student] are doing **or***

I haven't seen/heard from [student], and I'm calling to find out how I can support you to help get [student] back to school. Is now a good time to talk?

Helpful Hint: Asking "Is now a good time to talk?" communicates respect for the family's time and helps to build and strengthen a trusting relationship. If the family says now is not a good time to talk, ask when you can call back.

Then, check on **people**.

Start by checking in with the family member as a person. Remember that the family member you are talking to is likely juggling many competing responsibilities and may be experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety. Ask:

Helpful Hint: If a student has disengaged, say: "We miss seeing [student]. How is/are [she/he/they] doing?"

• As a parent/caregiver, how are you doing right now?


Questions for Trust Building

Regardless of the selected strategy, here are some key questions to ask of the student and family during the beginning of year relationship building conversations:

For the family:

- Tell me a little about your child – what do they like? What are they interested in?
- Where did you see your child grow during the last year? What challenges did they experience?
- What are your hopes and dreams for your student - both for the upcoming school year and in the future?
- What was something that surprised you about your child from the last school year?
- From your experience, what are some ways to teach, motivate, or inspire your child?
- As your child's teacher, what are your expectations of me?
- What is the best way to communicate with you?
- What are your concerns or considerations about the upcoming school year?
- What's most important to you right now?
- Do you have what you need to support learning at home this school year?
[Consider each of the [Five Essential Roles](#)]

Challenging Assumptions Reflection

Example Negative Beliefs about Families	What assumptions are being made about what it takes or what it looks/sounds like to support a child's learning?	How could this belief potentially impact an educator's actions?	What would you say to yourself/ask yourself (or someone else) if you were challenging this belief?*
 <p>Families aren't invested here.</p>	<p>Investment is when families attend school events, participate in the PTO, and volunteer to chaperone field trips. If parents aren't doing these things, then they are not invested.</p>	<p>If we operate from the belief that families aren't invested, we may limit communication and information sharing with families. We might stop trying to engage.</p>	<p>What are some of the invisible investments families might be making in their child's schooling?</p> <p>Who is this true for and how do you know?</p> <p>What would families say about that belief that they are not invested? Would they agree?</p> <p>What reasons might families have for not "showing up" in ways that we, as educators, hope they will?</p>

STRATEGY 4: COMMUNITY BUILDING MEETINGS

Community Building Meetings are experiential. Children and adults alike tend to better understand and retain information when they have a chance to practice things firsthand and get real-time support.

Consider:

- What is the family experience at the event?
- How are families practicing and learning the content alongside the educator and fellow families?

Ideas:

- An exhibition where families assess grade-level work with their student.
- College Night, where families and students analyze college applications.
- At Back to School Night, families log on and navigate the school's grade book, practicing how to check their students' overall grades, view assignments, and message the teacher. In middle or high school, students can teach families how to do this!



School Leader Tool



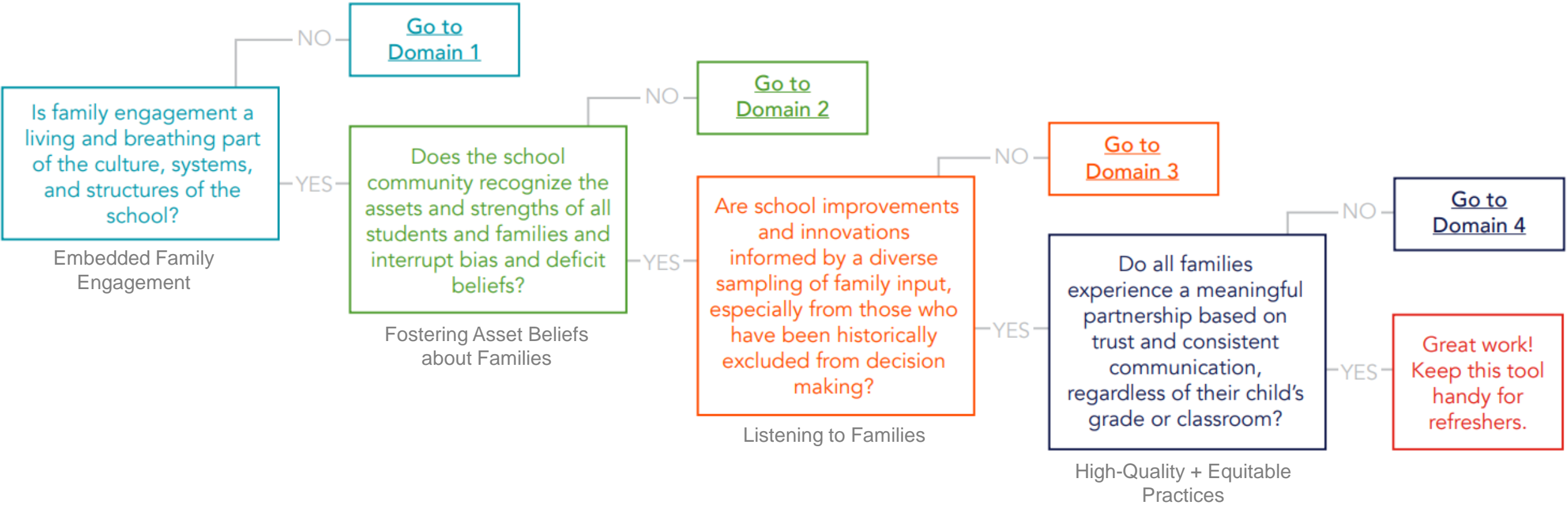
DOMAIN 1: EMBEDDED FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

DOMAIN 2: FOSTERING ASSET-BASED BELIEFS ABOUT FAMILIES

DOMAIN 3: LISTENING TO FAMILIES

DOMAIN 4: HIGH QUALITY + EQUITABLE PRACTICES

GETTING STARTED



AT-A-GLANCE

Domain 1: Embedded Family Engagement

Family engagement is a living and breathing part of the culture, systems, and structures of the school.

- How is family engagement connected to school-wide goals?
- Can every staff member clearly describe their role in supporting effective family engagement?
- How is family engagement connected to school-wide systems and structures, and reflected in your long-term plans?
- How are you creating time and space for staff to reflect on beliefs about families, their relationships with families, and the quality of families' experience at your school?
- In what ways does data inform school-wide messages and priorities?
- How would family engagement work be carried forward in the absence of key individuals?

Domain 3: Listening To Families

School improvements and innovations are informed by a diverse sampling of family input, especially from those who have been historically excluded from decision making.

- What questions do you ask families to inform school improvements and innovations?
- How do you develop staff to be empathic listeners?
- Whose input gets heard and receives the most traction? Why?
- How are you differentiating your outreach to families to ensure that families who have historically been excluded from decision making are heard?
- How are you strategically using input and feedback from families to make decisions in service of equity and impact?
- How are you communicating back to families how their input and feedback are utilized?

Domain 2: Fostering Asset-Based Beliefs About Families

The school community recognizes the assets and strengths of all students and families and interrupts bias and deficit beliefs.

- How do you routinely discuss and embrace the strengths of your students, families, and school community?
- How are you creating or strengthening a brave space and psychological safety for all staff to engage in conversations about beliefs and biases?
- How do you – as the school leader – challenge low expectations, deficit beliefs, and dispositions toward blaming families?
- How are you proactively building the capacity of staff to interrupt bias and deficit-based beliefs about families, both within themselves and amongst colleagues?
- How do staff interactions with families reflect their asset-based beliefs?

Domain 4: High-Quality + Equitable Practices

All families experience a meaningful partnership based on trust and consistent communication, regardless of their child's grade or classroom.

- How do your family engagement practices give families what they need to communicate high expectations, monitor and support learning, and guide and advocate for their child?
- How do you invest and build staff capacity for quality family engagement practices?
- How do staff use qualitative and quantitative data to reflect on the quality and impact of their family engagement practices?
- How will your approach to family engagement evolve based on your school's current needs and assets?
- How does your approach to family engagement reflect families' preferences and feedback?

REFLECTION PROMPTS + SAMPLE LEADER ACTIONS

Within each Domain are a set of prompts to guide reflection and coaching, and sample leader actions.

1. EMBEDDED FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

How is family engagement connected to school-wide goals?

- Connect family engagement goals and strategies to academic and SEL outcomes for students in foundational school documents such as school improvement plans.

4. HIGH-QUALITY + EQUITABLE PRACTICES

How do you invest and build staff capacity for quality family engagement practices?

- Ensure all school staff can clearly articulate what quality family engagement looks like and sounds like, specifically relationship building, academic partnering, and ongoing communication.

Priorities for Reopening Schools

Goal #2: Link Family Engagement to Student Learning



Additional Tools

- [Parent-Teacher Conversations About Learning](#)
- [Academic Parent Teacher Teams](#)
- [Demystify assessments and data](#)
- [Involve families in interactive homework](#)
- Real-time messaging about curriculum and home activities

<https://flamboyanfoundation.org/academic-partnering/>

What Families Want to Know:

- How is my child doing?
- What are they learning now?
- How can I help?



CONNECTICUT STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Thank You! Be Safe & Be Well!

Judy Carson
Education Consultant
School-Family-Community Partnerships
Connecticut State Department of Education
judy.carson@ct.gov

Kari Sullivan Custer
Education Consultant
Chronic Absence, Attendance and Truancy
Connecticut State Department of Education
kari.sullivan@ct.gov

Upcoming Attendance & Engagement Meetings

Next Talk Tuesday
Tuesday, **August 24**, 2021
10 to 11 a.m.

Have a **promising practice or success**
you want to share?

Concerns you want to share through peer discussion?

Send ideas for topics for discussion to
Kari.Sullivan@ct.gov.

Community of Practice
District Attendance Leads

Thursday, **August 19**, 2021
10 to 11:30 a.m.



Keep in touch!



**Kari
Sullivan Custer**

Kari.Sullivan@ct.gov

860-807-2041



Connect with CSDE for more information
on student attendance and engagement:



[Facebook.com/ctdepartmentofeducation](https://www.facebook.com/ctdepartmentofeducation)



<http://www.ct.gov/sde>



[@EducateCT](https://twitter.com/EducateCT)