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Full, Equal and Equitable Partnerships with Families

Connecticut's Definition and Framework for Family Engagement



CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Connecticut Early Childhood
Funder Collaborative
A PROJECT OF:



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INTRODUCTION

EVERY FEDERAL AND STATE PROGRAM THAT CONCERNS CHILDREN

from early childhood, elementary, secondary, and community education, to health, juvenile justice, and welfare – has policies, guidelines and requirements about reaching out to and communicating with families. Yet no clear and consistent definition of what that means, or even what it is called, has emerged.

Although the term “family engagement” is gaining recognition, parents¹, professionals, public officials, and community leaders mean many different things when they use it, and are uncertain about how to do it well. This inconsistency has created confusion and unpredictable practice at a time of growing understanding that closer collaboration with families is vitally important to children’s success.

The purpose of Connecticut’s common definition and framework of family engagement is to encourage shared understanding and collaboration, making it easy for all parties – educators², providers, partners, and families – to understand what is expected of them and what effective practice looks like. The hope is that this will lead to a robust culture of partnership between families and professionals throughout all education and human service programs.

¹The terms family/ies and parent/s are used in this paper to represent any adult caretakers who have responsibility for the well-being of a child or children. This includes, for example, biological parents, foster care providers, grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings, or fictive kin.

²The term educators is used to mean any person who teaches or is involved in planning or directing experiences that promote learning and development. This includes professionals in schools as well as those in early childhood settings, after school settings and community organizations.

GROWING CALLS FOR INCREASED FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

The Connecticut State Board of Education’s Five-year (2016-21) Comprehensive Plan, *Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All Connecticut Students*, calls for an equitable and excellent education for all Connecticut students that equips every child, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, family wealth, zip code, or disability status with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college, careers, and civic life. The plan identifies families as essential partners in student success and recognizes the need for authentic opportunities for meaningful parental engagement by building capacity for families and school staff to partner effectively in support of student success.

Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC)

The first goal of the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood’s 2020 Strategic Plan is for the agency to place children and families first. The specific objectives related to this goal include achieving a family-centered agency culture and reducing disparities in child and family outcomes. In addition, the second goal in the OEC’s Strategic Plan addresses increased access to high-quality programs. A main strategy for achieving this goal is the implementation of a Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS), which provides families with valuable information about early care and education program quality. The CT QRIS will also support programs to increase their level of quality related to key areas of quality, including family engagement.

Connecticut Early Childhood Funder Collaborative (ECFC)

Family engagement is core to the mission of the CT Early Childhood Funder Collaborative (a project of the Connecticut Council on Philanthropy) which is to bring the collective voice and resources of philanthropy to build and sustain a comprehensive early childhood system that works for all children, families, communities and the workforce in Connecticut. The ECFC and its 16 members including community and private foundations and United Ways from across the state recognize families, regardless of race, ethnicity, or income level, as powerful assets for their children’s successful development. The ECFC’s funder members value family voice and continually seek ways to infuse that voice in their community leadership and grant making efforts.

Every Student Succeeds Act, 2016

Each school district that receives federal Title I funds *shall* develop jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents and family members of participating children a written parent and family engagement policy. In addition, the policy *shall* be incorporated into the district’s plan, establish the agency’s expectations and objectives for meaningful parent and family involvement, and describe how the agency will: jointly develop the district plan; build school capacity; link to family engagement in other programs; jointly evaluate and improve the programs based on evaluation findings; and involve parents in the activities of Title I schools. (Title I, Section 1116)

I hope that teachers and staff will be open minded and disregard implicit biases that are disrespectful and hurtful to families. Meet families half way on their ground; listen to their needs and wants; and gain knowledge of the community they service.

**Connecticut Parent,
August 2017**

Who was involved and what did they do?

Three partners, **the CSDE, the OEC** and the **Connecticut ECFC**, joined with parents, educators and communities to co-create a common definition, framework and guiding principles for advancing state and local family engagement efforts across the state.

This short paper presents the definition, guiding principles, and recommendations for capacity-building, as well as comparative examples of evidence-based high-impact strategies for engaging families. Throughout, the voices of families, educators and community members are presented to reflect the rich conversations that fed into this work.

A Design Team of the three partner organizations' staff, as well as representatives of higher education, school districts, and parent organizations, coordinated the effort. The Design Team, along with an outside consultant, developed drafts and took their ideas to the Commissioner's Roundtable on Family and Community Engagement for review in June and September 2017. In between these meetings, the Team arranged for five focus groups across the state to capture parent voice and ideas. (See Appendix A for additional information)

For a final round of consultation, the three partners sponsored an invitational Symposium on Family and Community Engagement at Gateway Community College in New Haven on December 13, 2017. About 100 people attended, including members of the Commissioner's Roundtable and Design Team, parent and community organizations, state agency staff, school district officials, teacher organizations, and advocacy groups.

THE DEFINITION: A CLEAR CONSENSUS

The Design Team began with existing definitions of family engagement drawn from early childhood and elementary and secondary education organizations and programs. Throughout the many rounds of review and input, the message from parents, families, educators, policy makers and community members was increasingly clear and consistent:

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.

At the symposium, participants voiced their ideas about the meaning of key words in the definition:

- **Full** means that families, educators and community partners collaborate closely and consistently in promoting children's learning and development. This includes making sure that ALL children not only have access to high quality learning opportunities, but also the supports they need to succeed.

- **Equal** means that families and educators recognize that both bring valuable knowledge to the table. Parents know their children, culture, and community. Educators are trained in curriculum and child development. Their deep knowledge and skills are complementary, overlapping, and essential to ensuring success for all children.
- **Equitable** means that families are empowered to work with educators, public officials, and community partners to remove systemic, structural, and organizational barriers that perpetuate inequities and injustice. This includes ready access to ample opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills to become full and equal partners in that deliberate and intentional work.

Family engagement means that parents are seen as welcome partners in the education of children, and have a valued voice in the school. As a result, families are active participants, and communication is flowing between home and school. We believe that family engagement means mutual respect, honesty and trust.

**Connecticut Parents,
August 2017**

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

From the moment of birth throughout life, families have enormous influence on their children’s learning and development. A large body of research has identified high-impact strategies to engage families that can produce dramatic gains in children’s social and emotional development, academic achievement, and success in life (see Appendix B for citations). These guiding principles, which are grounded in that research, were the topic of lively discussions during the focus groups and Symposium:

1. BUILD COLLABORATIVE, TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS FOCUSED ON LEARNING.

For example: Offer getting-to-know-you meetings in smaller, informal settings. Make relationship-building home visits. Co-design with families a pre-school-elementary school transition program.

2. LISTEN TO WHAT FAMILIES SAY ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN’S INTERESTS AND CHALLENGES.

For example: Pay attention to different cultural perspectives and use families’ ideas to create programming, tailor instruction, improve discipline practices, design professional development, and recruit early learning providers, school leaders and staff.

3. MODEL HIGH-QUALITY LEARNING PRACTICES.

For example: Share how families can engage children in interactive play, reading, and hands-on math activities that promote problem solving. Invite families to visit the after-school program, meet staff, and join the activities. Host “classroom visits” for families to see firsthand what their kids are doing in class and how the classroom is set up for learning.

4. SHARE INFORMATION FREQUENTLY WITH FAMILIES ABOUT HOW THEIR CHILDREN ARE DOING.

For example: Talk about the skills that will help children upon their transition to kindergarten and discuss children’s progress with families regularly. Explain your school or program’s high achievement goals and ask families about their ideas to help their kids reach them.

I wish that teachers and staff would approach me with their heart, not just the standard expectation of our family/children. It would be nice to have a gathering where we just had a good time getting to know each other. Build positive relationships, without judgment or expectations.

**Connecticut Parent,
August 2017**

Trusting relationships between families and educators lay the foundation for strong partnership.

**Symposium
Participants,
December 2017**

5. TALK WITH STUDENTS ABOUT HOW THEY WANT TEACHERS AND FAMILIES TO SUPPORT THEIR LEARNING.

For example: Include students' ideas in Title I school-parent compacts, personal learning plans, and requests for professional learning. Respond to what students say about social and emotional issues. In middle and high school, set up an advisory system, so that all students have someone who knows them well and who can be their advocate in the school and the primary contact for their families.

6. CO-DEVELOP CULTURAL COMPETENCE AMONG STAFF AND FAMILIES.

For example: Build students' home cultures into programming and curriculum. Invite families and early learning providers/teachers/ community learning program staff to share their cultural and family traditions. Showcase the diversity in your early learning setting, school, or after-school program.

7. SUPPORT PARENTS TO BECOME EFFECTIVE LEADERS AND ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN.

For example: Collaborate with initiatives that develop parents' knowledge and skills to become civic leaders and problem-solvers. Provide information about how the education system works, from early childhood to higher education, and how to advocate for their children's needs and opportunities within that system.

(Charts 1-4 below illustrate how elementary, middle and high schools, early childhood and after school programs can move from lower to higher impact.)

Building Capacity to Do the Work: Stakeholders' Roles and Actions

Creating full, equal and equitable partnerships is a shared responsibility that requires systemic change in policy, resources, and practice. Families, educators and community partners need and want opportunities to develop their capacity to work together - to build trusting relationships, strengthen their confidence, expand personal networks, and deepen their understanding and core beliefs about family engagement.

At the Symposium, participants worked in role-alike groups (parents, teachers, administrators, community members, and policy-makers to identify the capacities each would need to carry out their roles and responsibility to further full, equal and equitable partnerships with families.

FAMILIES told us they want to learn how to advance their children's success and become leaders for greater access and opportunity. They strongly recommended offering access – and empowering parents to take advantage of that access – to learning opportunities such as:

- Collaborating with policy-makers, educators and community groups, to design more equitable, effective educational programs.
- Navigating our complex education system, from early childhood programs through college and career education.

- Advocating for more effective learning opportunities and resolving problems that may arise for their children.
- Supporting their children’s developmental and academic progress, and co-developing with teachers a plan to make the most of their school experience.
- Serving as leaders on governance councils, task forces and committees.

EDUCATORS AND OTHER ADULTS WHO SUPPORT CHILDREN’S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT want time, resources, and administrative support, such as more flexible schedules, professional development, and structured opportunities to work with families to:

- Co-create welcoming and inviting settings where all families are included.
- Connect family activities to school expectations and what students are learning in class, in ways that promote two-way and continuous communication.
- Recognize, honor, and learn from families’ diverse cultural viewpoints, knowledge and experience, and integrate this knowledge into student learning.
- Partner with families to advocate for children and remove barriers to their access to high-quality programs.
- Collaborate with community organizations and volunteers to support children and families.
- Align learning with community activities such as festivals and cultural celebrations.

(For more specific examples ranked from lower to higher impact, see Charts 1-4.)

POLICY-MAKERS, PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND PHILANTHROPISTS need to take the lead to:

- Create structures that include families as partners in decision-making.
- Engage families in developing improved policies and practices that will promote and sustain deep connections with families.
- Build partnership approaches into program development, evaluation, and monitoring, as well as staff recruitment and grant making.
- Recognize and honor parents and educators who create effective partnerships at all levels. Document and disseminate their work.
- Sustain these efforts with systemic resources -- financial support, staffing, professional development, community-driven accountability systems, and organizational structure.
- Portray these efforts as an investment in strengthening our education and human services systems to become more effective and equitable for all children.

A partnership is like a dance. Dance partners train together. School staff and parents will greatly benefit if they develop mutual expectations and practice together their cultural understanding and relationship building.

Symposium Participants, December 2017

If all families are valued, then they would most certainly stand beside, behind, and with, the school/early learning center when they choose to make necessary improvements for all children.

Connecticut Parent, August 2017

There needs to be honest and open conversation about the challenges and impacts of transferring power to parents.

**Symposium
Participants,
December 2017**

We invite everyone who is interested in promoting meaningful partnerships with families to join the partners who have signed onto the *Statement of Definition and Guiding Principles*.

Implementing the Framework: An Invitation to Partners

What do the three initiating partners plan to do to make this a reality?

Connecticut State Department of Education

will integrate Connecticut's Definition and Framework for Family Engagement in the agency's policy and programmatic efforts by:

- presenting the definition and framework to the Connecticut State Board of Education;
- engaging the Commissioner's Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement in promoting strategies for implementation;
- sharing across the CSDE and endorsing use of the definition in funded programs; and
- partnering the OEC and the ECFC to engage stakeholders in implementation, continuous improvement and feedback.

The CT Office of Early Childhood

will continue work on multiple efforts related to engaging families as full partners in the work of the agency and in the early care and education programs the OEC supports by:

- continuing to create policy that elevates the role of families in decision-making;
- building tools and resources to support early care and education programs in partnering with families to understand their child's learning and development and guide program improvement efforts;
- educating OEC staff and funded programs on Connecticut's Definition and Framework for Family Engagement to promote the infusion of these principles into all OEC work; and
- continuing to advance the Commissioner's two-generation work to support both families and children through innovative programs

Connecticut Early Childhood Funder Collaborative

will continue to expand strategies funders can employ to support high quality family engagement by:

- connecting to national funders to advance best practice;
- exploring the development of a funder self-assessment tool to improve the effectiveness of philanthropic support for family engagement;
- sharing the statement with other funders and encouraging the use of the definition in philanthropic investments and initiatives; and
- partnering with CSDE and OEC to align investments and share models of effective family and community engagement.

Invitation

The initiating partners invite family leadership groups, schools, community-based organizations and agencies, philanthropic organizations, and others who are interested in promoting full, equal and equitable partnerships with families to join in implementing Connecticut's Definition and Framework for Family Engagement.

CHART 1

What Does High-Impact Family Engagement Look Like in Early Childhood Programs?

Higher Impact on student learning and development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
1. Families and childcare providers do neighborhood walks to meet prospective families and hand out program information, books, and growth charts.	Springtime open house for new families, hosted by current families.	Preschool registration on program website or drop in.
2. Family-to-Family Learning! Pre-K families share family engagement strategies with new families in familiar neighborhood settings and sign them up for things like Parent Teacher Home Visits, Ready4K, and Community Café. Short videos of families' sharing are sent with texts or emails to families who couldn't attend, with sign-up sheets and surveys attached.	Family Night. Families visit classrooms, meet teachers, view children's work, sign-up to volunteer, and receive a family phone tree compiled by staff.	Back to School Night. Families visit classrooms, meet teachers, and have refreshments.
3. A program communication app, like Class DOJO, creates two-way communication and ongoing exchange of knowledge between families and teachers.	Monthly phone calls, emails, or texts with information on program activities.	Program newsletter with generic messaging.
4. Children take turns taking home The Book Bag (a book, a journal with family assignment, and colored pencils). When the Book Bag is returned after two nights, children share their experience and drawings during morning meeting.	Children pick a book to take home so their families can read aloud.	Families volunteer to read stories in the program.
5. During classroom observations, teachers model strategies to support specific learning at home. Families ask questions and practice strategies with each other then go home with a "tip sheet." Short videos modeling the strategies are sent with emails or texts to families who couldn't attend, and a list of the families' questions and teachers' answers are attached along with the tip sheet.	At evening meetings, staff share information regarding areas of child development with families and show how those areas are covered in the classroom.	Teachers send home written materials on developmental areas (e.g. social-emotional, motor, cognitive).
6. Parent Teacher Home Visits twice a year. Teachers visit in the fall to launch relationships and in winter or spring to share information to support smooth transition to kindergarten.	Parent-Teacher Conferences twice a year, available evenings and on weekends.	Parent Teacher Conferences by appointment during work days.
7. Monthly Community Cafés Hosted by trained family members, parents take part in meaningful, guided conversations during which they support and learn from each other and collect input and feedback for the program.	Monthly breakfast gatherings for families and staff.	Families can visit the program site by appointment.
8. Community Café participants have a voice in all major program decisions and develop and support parent-initiated projects.	Families can volunteer to meet with program director or family care provider quarterly to share family feedback.	Suggestion box in the office/provider's home.
9. Families Come to Build Day! Scheduled throughout the year, family members come to school to build with their children. Teachers collect a huge variety of blocks, put up posters with tips for the activity so family members ask open-ended questions, model appropriate descriptive vocabulary, and document the building process with photos and dictated stories from the children.	Family Day Events planned by families, family members come to school, read to their children, do crafts, and enjoy refreshments.	Family Day Celebration Annual party with games and food.

CHART 2

What Does High Impact Family Engagement Look Like in Elementary Schools?

Higher Impact on student learning and development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
1. Back to School Night class meetings where parents and teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share learning strategies • Review key skills for students with home learning tips • Develop a communications plan 	Open House <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents tour school, chat with teachers • Classroom visits to meet teacher • Exhibits of student work 	Back to School night in the auditorium <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel of speakers • Pass out student handbooks • Hand out school calendar
2. Regular two-way calls/texts/emails to share progress and tips.	Positive personal phone calls home	Robocalls about school events
3. Family center, staffed, with workshops on learning strategies, referrals to social services, and informal gatherings.	Parent resource room with toys, games and books to borrow	School newsletters with generic messages
4. Relationship-building home visits by teachers, voluntary for both teachers and families and available for all families.	Coffee with the principal; Muffins for Moms; Donuts with Dads	Potlucks, other traditional whole-school-based events
5. Story quilting workshops and poetry slams where parents, teachers and students all tell their stories, share their work.	School book club and authors' tea featuring student writers	Student performances
6. Classroom observations with mini-lessons; weekly data-sharing folders go home, with space for parent comments.	Interactive homework with tips for home learning	Curriculum nights
7. Student-led conferences with portfolios of student work, followed by 1:1 conversations about learning, to set goals.	Parent-teacher conferences twice a year, available evenings and weekend	Parent-teacher conferences, during work day
8. Tours of school led by students and community walks led by parents and custodians.	Monthly breakfasts for new families	Visit school by appointment
9. School council has voice in all major decisions; develops and supports parent-initiated projects.	Parent organization meets with principal to discuss suggestions	Suggestion box in office
10. Candidate forum at Fun Fair; parents and students meet in advance, prepare to ask questions regarding issues affecting families.	Candidates for election invited to Fun Fair	Fall Fun Fair
11. Parent leadership classes strengthen family capacity to navigate the system, be effective advocates, and take part in school councils and committees.	Adult learning evenings	Parenting classes

CHART 3

What Does High-Impact Family Engagement Look Like in After School Programs?

Higher Impact on student learning and development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
1. Afterschool classes are linked to school curriculum. Teachers and program staff collaborate to track students' growth targets and keep families up to date.	A teacher from the school shares data with tutoring staff on student skills.	Staff informs families that program offers tutoring on reading and math.
2. Frequent, informal gatherings for families, school staff, and community partners to foster collaboration and info-sharing.	Students perform and show their work at quarterly family nights.	Staff is available to talk with families on orientation day.
3. Staff and families co-develop intervention plans to address students' social and/or academic concerns.	Staff interview families regarding children's successes and challenges.	On orientation day, families fill out an information form.
4. Regular meetings with families to discuss student progress, share information, and confer on strategies to support learning.	Annual survey asks parents about students' experience with the program.	Tip sheets sent home on promoting student health and learning.
5. The after school program collaborates with other school-based and community programs to make the school a "hub" of activities for students, families and community members.	Program hosts information fairs about community resources and programs.	Community bulletin board posts notices about local happenings.
6. Family support groups and education classes promote family learning, develop job skills, and address health needs.	Staff refer families to GED and job training programs offered by community partners.	Families can sign up for the Volunteer Program.
7. "Community advocates" develop rapport with families of children at risk, provide advice and links to extra support, and help families navigate social services.	Program staff receive extra pay to serve as informal advisors and mentors to students.	Staff refers struggling children to outside counseling program.
8. Local partners co-sponsor community-building and cultural events at after school site, such as a Health Fair or Heritage Celebration, that attract hundreds of families and community members.	Families and staff plan special events to honor student success and celebrate the beginning and end of school year.	Program offers fall and spring celebrations for students and families.
9. In the Leadership institute, parents learn ways to foster their own and their children's education, support their families financially, develop social networks, and advocate for high quality schools.	Program staff invite public officials to attend events, meet families and answer questions about community issues.	Program office displays flyers and brochures about community resources and learning opportunities.

CHART 4

What Does High Impact Family Engagement Look Like in Middle and High Schools?

Higher Impact on student learning/success	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
<p>1. Transition program – events at feeder schools, tours of new school, 4-week HS prep summer course – welcomes families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convey college/career prep focus - your student will graduate in 4 years with college acceptance letter in hand • Relate academic programs to careers • Prepare students for high school work • Help families construct their role in supporting their students' success 	<p>Fall Family Academy to orient incoming families to expectations of students, such as attendance requirements and credits needed for graduation.</p>	<p>At freshman orientation, parents can pick up their students' class schedules and bus passes, and tour the school.</p>
<p>2. Workshops for families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses needed to graduate and go to college/post-secondary education • What high-level academic work looks like at each grade level • Where to get needed help for students • Tests, applications and timelines required for college 	<p>Staff conduct trainings for families to help them understand how to navigate the requirements of high school.</p>	<p>Information sheets about school programs and college resources available in the school office.</p>
<p>3. Advisory System: Each student has an adult advisor who develops close relationships with families to co-design students' academic program, set up regular communications, and serve as main contact.</p>	<p>Parent liaisons check in with parents about use of homework help and other resources for students.</p>	<p>Parents receive "early-bird" notices from school when their students fall behind.</p>
<p>4. Monitoring progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coursework sequence and college track requirements are clear and explicit • Advisors keep parents current on student progress, with focus on students at risk • Parents invited to exhibits of student work, where students present and critique their work • Parents are reminded to check classroom websites for information on projects and student work • Student-led conferences review portfolio of student work, supports needed to do their best work and stay on track 	<p>Parent liaisons help parents use district's student performance tracking system. Teachers keep a record of students' "positive traits" to share in "good news" calls.</p>	<p>School contacts families when students are having a problem with academics or behavior.</p>
<p>5. College and career planning begins early, a graduation plan is done by end of 9th grade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents invited to post-secondary education fairs • Staff recruit parents to visit colleges • Workshops for parents on PSAT, SAT, and ACT exams; offer help completing college applications and applying for financial aid • Parents given guiding questions for discussing Student Success Plans with their student to reflect on successes, areas for growth and new goals • Special assistance for undocumented families 	<p>College/Technical Program fair every fall, with focus on 11th and 12th graders. Parent liaisons and community partners reach out to invite families and remind them to review the Student Success Plan for their child.</p>	<p>Parents can make appointments to confer with guidance counselors, and receive a handout with information about how to review the Student Success Plan.</p>
<p>6. Parent organization and leadership represent all families in the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent leaders sit on college pathways and school leadership teams • Parent organization does focus groups with families to surface issues and report back to school leadership 	<p>Homework help and mentoring program to ensure families know about and can access academic help for their student.</p>	<p>AmeriCorps volunteers distribute flyers throughout the community to remind parents about events and parent-teacher conferences.</p>

CHART 5

What Does High-Impact Family Engagement Look Like in Reducing Chronic Absence?

Higher Impact on Student Learning and Development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
Summer Transition: Teachers and school staff meet with families in community spaces before the start of school to talk about what students will be learning, the connection between too many absences and poor achievement, and they co-construct solutions for regular attendance.	A letter is mailed before school starts to families of kindergarten and elementary students who had poor attendance in the previous year, letting them know attendance in early grades affects student learning.	The importance of attendance is communicated through posters in school and flyers in backpacks at the beginning of the year.
Ongoing Outreach: Teachers make personal phone calls to families when students miss school to discuss the importance of attendance and what students are learning in class. Teachers follow up regularly with personal text messages regarding the student's progress.	School staff call a student's parent when the student misses three days in a row to determine the reason for absence.	When a student is absent, the school's computer calls home with a recorded message.
Personal Communications: Each family of a student who is chronically absent receives a monthly letter in the mail, in language that is friendly and accessible, letting them know how many days their child has missed. School staff make follow-up calls to families to discuss challenges to attending school, co-construct solutions for regular attendance and make connections to community resources.	Monthly e-mail reminders are sent to parents about how many absences constitute chronic absence at this point in the year.	Flyers are sent home through students' backpacks letting parents know that they should track their child's attendance online in the parent portal.
Relational Home Visits: Teachers conduct relational home visits focused on building a relationship and discussing the family's and teacher's hopes and dreams for the student's education and future.	Home visits are made by an attendance officer to students who are chronically absent to determine reasons for the absence.	Parents are notified of the number of days students are absent through report cards, which indicate if the number of absences are problematic.
Health: The school nurse, as part of the school attendance team, builds a relationship with students and their parents to create a health/attendance plan and (with parents' permission) connects with the pediatrician.	The school attendance team tracks reasons for absences and when a student misses school consistently for illness, the school nurse calls the student to the office to discuss.	The school hands out flyers indicating when a student should stay home or not due to illness.
Mentors: Staff are trained as mentors for moderately absent students and families; they form mentoring relationships with students and have regular two-way communications with families about student progress.	A staff member is assigned for each moderately absent student; they greet the student in the morning and make monthly "good news" calls to parents.	The school data system flags moderately absent students and parents are notified through e-mail.
Student Ownership: Students show their parents how to track attendance using a short video on the school's Web page and together they complete the Student Attendance Success Plan at home.	Students track their own attendance in math class and write about ways they can plan to attend school every day.	Students who are absent must bring a note from home when they return to school.
Parent Leaders: As part of the school attendance team, parent leaders create a parent network to identify common barriers to attendance and build relationships among families for assistance in times of need (e.g, dropping off or picking up children, transportation and translation). Staff participate in the parent network and support parent leaders.	Student data is analyzed to disaggregate the number of chronically absent students in subgroups. Staff engage families in conversations to identify common barriers and solutions for attendance.	When a student becomes severely chronically absent, parents are required to meet with an administrator or attendance officer.
Community Partners: Parent leaders organize community resource fairs in neighborhood centers throughout the year, beginning with a summer event. School administrators and staff participate and provide learning materials and attendance information.	Community partners are showcased at a family event during Attendance Awareness Month and attendance awareness materials are posted in the community.	The attendance policy is stated in the student handbook with a list of community partners that provide support to families.

Appendix A: Sources of Input from Families and Other Stakeholders

Focus Groups

Parents and families gave us their ideas in five focus groups around the state and on social media.

- Parent Leadership Training Institute graduates, via Facebook, organized by Melvette Hill, National Parent Leadership Institute, on August 15, 2017.
- Families at Nike Tykes Early Learning Center in Manchester, CT, organized by program director Shelly Garow on September 12, 2017.
- Families at Griswold Elementary School in Griswold, CT, organized by Sandy Frizzel, School Readiness Liaison, on September 13, 2017
- Fathers affiliated with Real Dads Forever, organized by program founder Doug Edwards in Manchester, CT, on October 4, 2017.
- Family and Community Engagement and Early Learning Center in Danbury CT, organized by Anne Mead, on October 31, 2017.

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The Commissioner's Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement in Education

Chair

Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell
Commissioner of Education
Connecticut State Department of Education

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Ms. Audrey Brown, *Parent*
Representing: African Caribbean American Parents of
Children with Disabilities (AFCAMP)

Ms. Lisa Fair, *Parent*
Achievement First
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Ms. Jennifer Falotico
Vice President for Membership
Connecticut Parent Teacher Association

Ms. Aggie Kurzyna, *Parent*
Representing: CT Parent Power

Ms. Jennifer Lussier, *Parent Consultant*
Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center

Mr. Bryan Randall, *Personnel Officer*
U.S. Naval Submarine Base
Representing: State Council for Educational
Opportunities for Military Children

Ms. Donna Thompson-Bennett
National Coordinator
National Parent Leadership Institute

Ms. Tynima Toney
Parent Coach
Hartford Parent University

Ms. Athena Wagner
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State of Black Connecticut Alliance/CT Parents' Union

Mr. Beresford Wilson
Assistant Director
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Community Organization Representative

Dr. Jeana Bracey, *Director*
School and Community Initiatives
Child Health and Development Institute

Ms. Paula Gilberto, *CEO*
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Ms. Natasha Harris
Director of Workforce Quality Assurance
Urban League of Greater Hartford

Ms. Tamara Lanier
Chief Probation Officer
Connecticut Judicial Branch,
Court Support Services Division
Representing: Connecticut State Conference of NAACP

Ms. Chemay Morales-James
Educational Equity Coach
My Reflection Matters & Bridge to Success
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Mr. David Scata
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Mohegan Tribe

Ms. Sara Sneed, *Director, Education Investments*
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Ms. Mirellise Vazquez, *Executive Director*
Tauck Family Foundation
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Education Organization Representatives

Dr. Abie Benitez, *President*
Connecticut Association of Latino Administrators
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Representing: CT Association of Schools (CAS)

Mr. Jeffrey Bianco, *Co-Chair*
Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
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Dr. Paige Bray, *Associate Dean for Research and Community Education*
Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education
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Ms. Elizabeth Brown, *President*
Waterbury Board of Education
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Education (CABE)

Ms. Mary Lou DiPaola, *ESL Teacher*
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Professional Employees (AFT-CT)

Dr. Clifford Dudley, *Principal*
Orchard Hills School
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Mr. Mario Florez, *Director of School Climate and Culture*
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Mr. Matthew Geary, *Superintendent of Schools*
Manchester Public Schools
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Mr. John Taylor, *Executive Director*
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Mr. Giancarlo Isotti, *Student*
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Appendix B: Selected Research References

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