

How to Get the Most from “Successful Schools: Families Matter”

View the program or selected segments and ...

Improve student success by including family, school and community partnership activities in your school improvement plan as a way to address both academic and non-academic goals. See what others have done and consider what would work for you.

Start a conversation with your school staff, school leadership team, parent organization or community group. Use the questions that follow to discuss what your school or district can do.

Build awareness in your community. Ask your local cable access or public television channel to broadcast this program.

Program Segments

Karen Mapp, Harvard University

Karen Mapp is a lecturer on education at Harvard's Graduate School of Education and former Deputy Superintendent for Family and Community Engagement in Boston. She reviews current research and suggests ways districts/schools can develop family engagement that leads to increased achievement.

Discussion Questions for Karen Mapp

Karen co-authored “A New Wave of Evidence,” (<http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/fam33.html>) a study of 51 research projects. She

mentions key findings that support student success: family engagement at home and linking family engagement activities to learning.

1. What can your school/district do to support learning at home? What training or other resources would educators need to do this well?
2. Think about your school/district activities that involve families. If they don't currently link to learning, what can you do differently?
3. How can family and community partnership activities become part of your school improvement plan? What family/community engagement activities address specific learning goals?



Beacon Hill Elementary, Seattle

This school has a diverse population, with more than 52 percent Asian and 30 percent Hispanic students. With input from families and the community, Beacon Hill has developed several ways to meet the needs of various refugee and immigrant families.

This segment features:

- Latino Family Group: Once a month they gather to socialize, keep up on school activities and get parenting tips.
- Kindergarten Parent Language Program: Latino parents learn with their children in Spanish and English every day before school starts.

- Family Literacy Program: Families read books in English with their children at school and continue the reading and learning at home.

Discussion Questions for Beacon Hill

Beacon Hill realized more than half of their families' home language is something other than English, and that they needed to reach out in new and different ways.

1. Think about your school/district's students and their families, who are you not reaching well?
2. What can you do to make your communication with these families more inviting and effective?

Beacon Hill has found ways to support English development with students and their families.

1. Is there a service or learning opportunity your school/district can provide that would be welcomed by families?
2. What can you do to help families support learning at home?



Federal Way School District

Looking for ways to get more middle school students to meet academic standards, Federal Way reached out to the community for help. Together, they developed the Heritage

Leadership Camp for male students to promote leadership and academic excellence.

The Heritage Leadership Camp:

- Meets three times during the school year for daylong workshops.
- Twelve community mentors promote leadership and academic excellence to 60 middle school students.
- Receives leadership and support from the district superintendent and the district family partnership advocate.

Discussion Questions for Federal Way

Federal Way realized that they needed to reach beyond school staff and recruited community members to inspire, motivate and educate their middle school students who were struggling.

1. After reviewing your school/district data, what groups of students are struggling?
2. Who can you partner with in the community to help these students?
3. Who will provide leadership and support for this effort in your school and district?

A key to the success of the Heritage Leadership Camp is having the community partner's role clearly defined, particularly in terms of time and responsibilities.

4. As you move forward with your community partnership, what will you do to be sure that roles and responsibilities are clear, and that everyone feels

supported and appreciated for their efforts?

5. What is your communication plan? Who needs to be informed? By when? By whom?



Grandview High School

Wanting to further engage students and their families in education, Grandview High School adopted the popular Navigation 101, a guidance program that starts during a student's freshman year and ends at graduation. They customized the program and called it Grandview Education Mastering Success or "GEMS."

GEMS components featured include:

- Advisory classes, where students work on goal setting, communication skills, academics and developing a portfolio.
- Student-led conferences with advisors and family members help students connect their current learning to their plan for life beyond high school.

Discussion Questions for Grandview

Through their shift to student-led conferences, Grandview High School increased their family participation rate from 40 to 80 percent. This has put students in charge of their learning, improved school-home communication and has given families a meaningful way to be involved with their child's education.

1. What can your school/district do to engage more families with their students' learning?

2. How can you build your students' understanding about their own learning to motivate their development and to share this with their families?

GEMS provides families an opportunity for meaningful engagement at the secondary level.

1. How can your school/district work together with families and students to build personal pathways to high school graduation and beyond?

To learn more about family, school and community partnerships, visit www.yourlearningcenter.org.



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Viewer's Guide

