

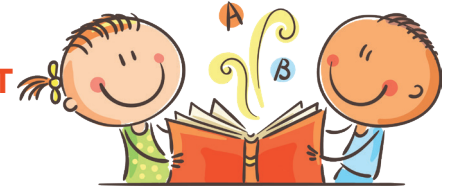


# MAKING THE CASE FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

*“Research continues to confirm that family engagement is one of the most powerful predictors of children’s development, educational attainment and success in school and life.”*

Decades of research has identified two basic principles that offer strong underpinnings for effective family engagement strategies.

## **FAMILIES AS CO-DESIGNERS IN CULTURALLY RELEVANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES.**



Families must be equal thought partners in all initiatives that involve participation of their children or themselves. Engaging families in leadership roles keeps them central in their children’s academic progress, guaranteeing that they don’t feel like outsiders.<sup>1</sup>

Families are the “first teachers” for children. In fact, longitudinal studies have confirmed the validity of the proposition that high-quality early education, combined with strong family engagement, generates lasting success for children. Families’ knowledge is extensive and their needs should be valued in the creation of any initiatives.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, families play critical roles in encouraging their children to pursue STEM, as well as helping to navigate career pathways for students.<sup>3</sup>

Culturally relevant and responsive programs and communication strategies are indispensable to ensuring meaningful, sustained relationships with families. Most notably, language, educators and community serving organizations should leverage translation resources and technology to best serve families.<sup>4</sup>

Language, however, is not the only element of cultural understanding necessary to ensure successful relationship building. Other elements include:

- Helping families understand the American system of testing. Report cards and other methods of measurement and evaluation must be given to families in comprehensive, honest and easy-to-understand terms.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Global Family Research Project for the Carnegie Corporation of America. “Joining Together to Create a Bold Vision for Next Generation Family Engagement Engaging Families to Transform Education.” October 2018. < [https://www.carnegie.org/media/filer\\_public/f8/78/f8784565-4bd6-4aa3-bd80-2b98fd43380e/parent-engagement-2018.pdf](https://www.carnegie.org/media/filer_public/f8/78/f8784565-4bd6-4aa3-bd80-2b98fd43380e/parent-engagement-2018.pdf) >

<sup>2</sup>Global Family Research Project for the Carnegie Corporation of America. “Joining Together to Create a Bold Vision for Next Generation Family Engagement Engaging Families to Transform Education.” October 2018. < [https://www.carnegie.org/media/filer\\_public/f8/78/f8784565-4bd6-4aa3-bd80-2b98fd43380e/parent-engagement-2018.pdf](https://www.carnegie.org/media/filer_public/f8/78/f8784565-4bd6-4aa3-bd80-2b98fd43380e/parent-engagement-2018.pdf) >

<sup>3</sup>Kekelis, Linda and Kara Sammet. “Expanding Access and Inclusion in STEM through Culturally Responsive Family Engagement.” < <https://stemnext.org/family-engagement-taking-it-to-the-next-level/> >

<sup>4</sup>Lim, Heejae. “Breaking Down Barriers Between Educators and Families Through Technology.” The 74, Oct. 23, 2018.

< <https://www.carnegie.org/news/articles/breaking-down-barriers-between-educators-and-families-through-technology/> >

<sup>5</sup>Keeling, David. “American Students and Families are Getting Lost in an Avalanche of Confusing Information.” The 74, Oct. 23, 2018.

< <https://www.carnegie.org/news/articles/american-students-and-families-are-getting-lost-avalanche-confusing-information/> >

- Flexible scheduling for communication points and design of the student / family experience must be heavily considered in the development of programming to be inclusive and ensure that families are not further marginalized.<sup>6</sup>

What works for one student or community might not work for another and this must be considered in all learning initiatives.<sup>7</sup> Appreciation for cultural learning models - how the public or communities think about effective learning - will support ecosystems in creating effective and long-term family engagement.<sup>8</sup>

**EFFECTIVE AND TIMELY COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES IS CRITICAL, AS WELL AS METHODS OF COMMUNICATION. FAMILIES CANNOT INSPIRE THEIR CHILDREN IF THEY HAVE NO INFORMATION.**



Every family looks, communicates and understands differently. Effective communication with families requires an understanding of the context in which they live. This might include the expansion of learning for educators, including access to language translation resources, timing of events, information delivery methods and communication mediums.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, it is essential that institutions give educators, teachers and service providers the tools to ensure engagement success.<sup>10</sup> This includes:

- Honest and direct communication with families about report cards;<sup>11</sup>
- Strategies to communicate with families in their dominant language<sup>12</sup>; and
- Comprehensive information that gives families the whole picture at the time they need it.<sup>13</sup>

When surveyed, many parents believe that they are lacking information to provide feedback and guidance related to their children’s learning experiences and opportunities.<sup>14</sup> Families not only need all of this information, but they must also be able to make adjustments and see ways to provide feedback.

Teachers and educators must be given the tools, skills and resources necessary to facilitate the development of respectful, empathetic relationships with families to encourage feedback. Effective feedback loops are necessary to support both families and educators in their understanding of a child’s development, as well as discuss next steps for that young person’s success.



<sup>6</sup>Suarez-Orozco, Carola. "The Diverse Immigrant Student Experience: What Does It Mean for Teaching?" Educational Studies, vol. 53, no. 5, 2017, pp. 522-534. DOI: 10.1080/00131946.2017.1355796 < <https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fa0018201> >

<sup>7</sup>Suarez-Orozco, Carola, Francisco X. Gaytan, Hee Jin Bang, Juliana Pakes, Erin O'Connor, and Jean Rhodes. "Academic Trajectories of Newcomer Immigrant Youth," Developmental Psychology, vol. 46, no. 3, 2010, pp. 603-618.

<sup>8</sup>FrameWorks Institute. "Crossing the Boundaries: Mapping the Gaps between Expert and Public Understandings of Bridging STEM Learning Environments." < [https://joanganzcooneycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/jgcc\\_frameworksinstitute\\_crossingtheboundaries.pdf](https://joanganzcooneycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/jgcc_frameworksinstitute_crossingtheboundaries.pdf) >

<sup>9</sup>Global Family Research Project for the Carnegie Corporation of America. "Joining Together to Create a Bold Vision for Next Generation Family Engagement Engaging Families to Transform Education." October 2018. < [https://www.carnegie.org/media/filer\\_public/f8/f8784565-4bd6-4aa3-bd80-2b98fd43380e/parent-engagement-2018.pdf](https://www.carnegie.org/media/filer_public/f8/f8784565-4bd6-4aa3-bd80-2b98fd43380e/parent-engagement-2018.pdf) >

<sup>10</sup>Borello, Vito and Reyna Hernandez. "Addressing Obstacles to Family Engagement." The 74, Oct. 24, 2018. < <https://www.carnegie.org/news/articles/addressing-obstacles-family-engagement/> >

<sup>11</sup>Bradshaw, Kenya. "Changing Mindset, Changing Outcomes: A New Paradigm for Teacher-Parent Partnerships." The 74, Oct. 23, 2018. < <https://www.carnegie.org/news/articles/changing-mindsets-changing-outcomes-new-paradigm-teacher-parent-partnerships/> >

<sup>12</sup>Lim, Heejae. "Breaking Down Barriers Between Educators and Families Through Technology." The 74, Oct. 23, 2018. < <https://www.carnegie.org/news/articles/breaking-down-barriers-between-educators-and-families-through-technology/> >

<sup>13</sup>Keeling, David. "American Students and Families are Getting Lost in an Avalanche of Confusing Information." The 74, Oct. 23, 2018. < <https://www.carnegie.org/news/articles/american-students-and-families-are-getting-lost-avalanche-confusing-information/> >

<sup>14</sup>Learning Heroes, "Parents 2017: Unleashing their Power and Potential." The 74, October 2017. < [https://r50gh2slic2mww8s3uvjvq1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/LH\\_ParentsReport2017\\_20170719\\_MasterScreen\\_SinglePages\\_AN.pdf](https://r50gh2slic2mww8s3uvjvq1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/LH_ParentsReport2017_20170719_MasterScreen_SinglePages_AN.pdf) >



*"Thanks to generous support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Our Neighborhood, is a growing online compilation of stories and research from the family engagement field. It is intended to be a living repository and guide for STEM Learning Ecosystems and other communities interested in cultivating strong community partnerships to prepare the next generation."*