

The Magic of Family Engagement Critical Components



Families are by no means a homogeneous group. They come from various perspectives and contexts – from young parents to grandparents raising grandchildren to parents of children with special needs to those who are immigrants or refugees.

To be successful in building authentic partnerships with families we must ensure that our strategies and practices are strength-based. Focusing on problems and pathology creates negative energy which is disempowering to everyone.

Connecting with families is an inside job. We must practice vulnerability and lead with warmth. Only then will we have the hearts of our families.

Five Critical Components for engaging families authentically are:

1. **Commitment** – Start small, be intentional. What you pay attention to grows.
2. **Transparent Relationship** – Be willing and able to speak and hear the truth.
3. **Share responsibility for student success** – Operate without blame or criticism.
4. **Acceptance** – An absence of focusing on fixing or changing families.
5. **Appreciation** – Done in a genuine and demonstrable way.

**Check your readiness for family engagement.
Are you starting your efforts on solid ground?**

- ✓ Is your school a welcoming place for families?
- ✓ Are there positive things being said about families?
- ✓ Has staff received professional development on engaging families?
- ✓ Are the prevailing attitudes and beliefs about family engagement positive or negative?
(Use the Family Engagement survey instrument).

*"It's not how do we **GET** families involved, it's how do we **LET** them be involved."* Barb Flis, Parent Action for Healthy Kids

