

Elementary Family Engagement Model

How do we engage and communicate with
our families?

Our Purpose

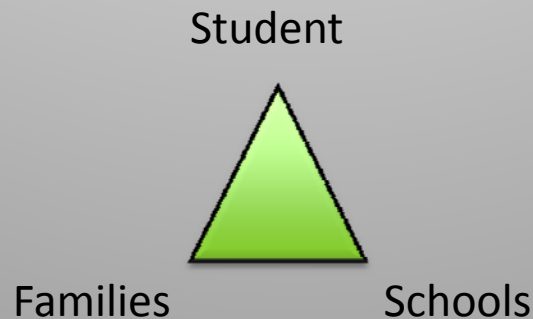
- Promote a partnership between all stakeholders to work together to increase student achievement and support learning
- Define and develop a successful model for engaging families in their child's learning
- Seek clarity and consistency about how we partner with and communicate with elementary school families

Our Beliefs

- All families have dreams for their children and want the best for them
- All families have the capacity to support their child's learning
- Families and schools should be equal partners and responsible for building partnerships

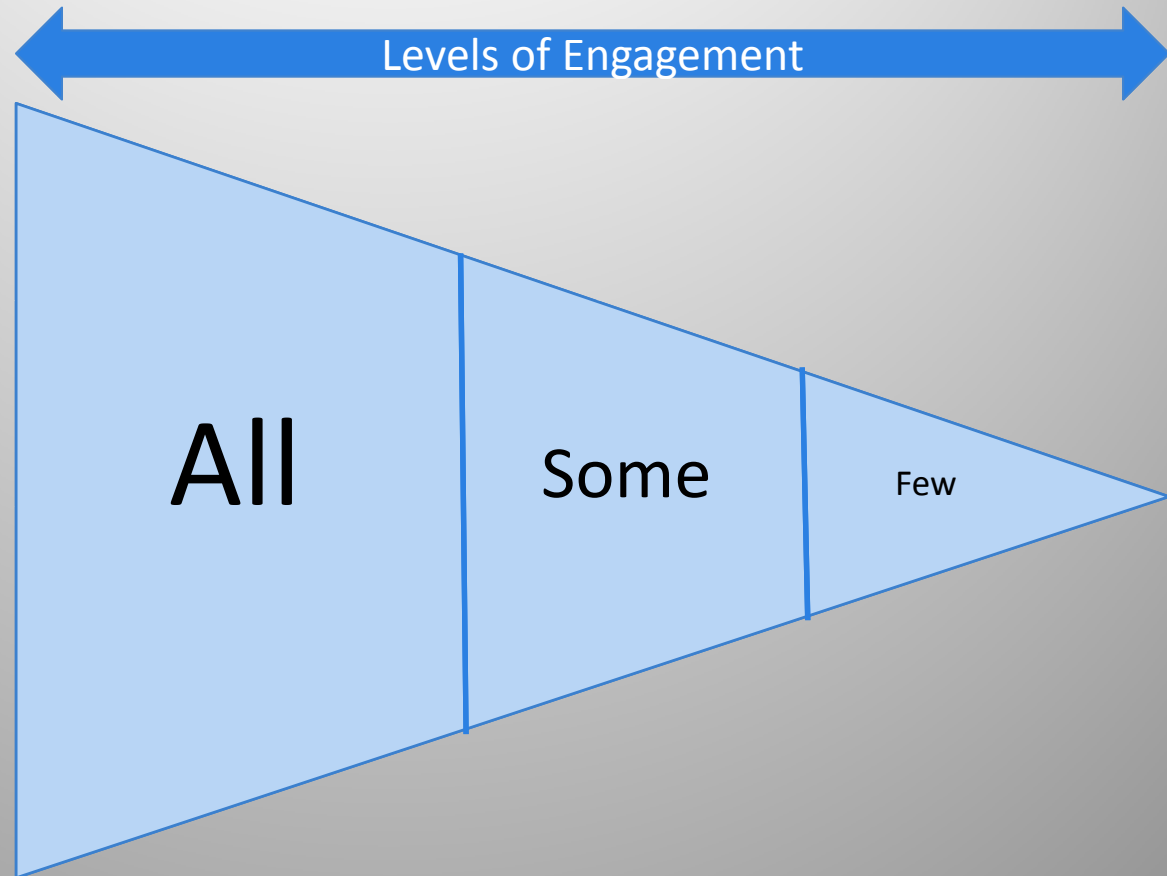
What is Family Engagement?

- Ongoing reciprocal partnership between families and educators that encourages and supports communication, both informational and educational, about student progress and performance to help build a stronger home-to-school connection

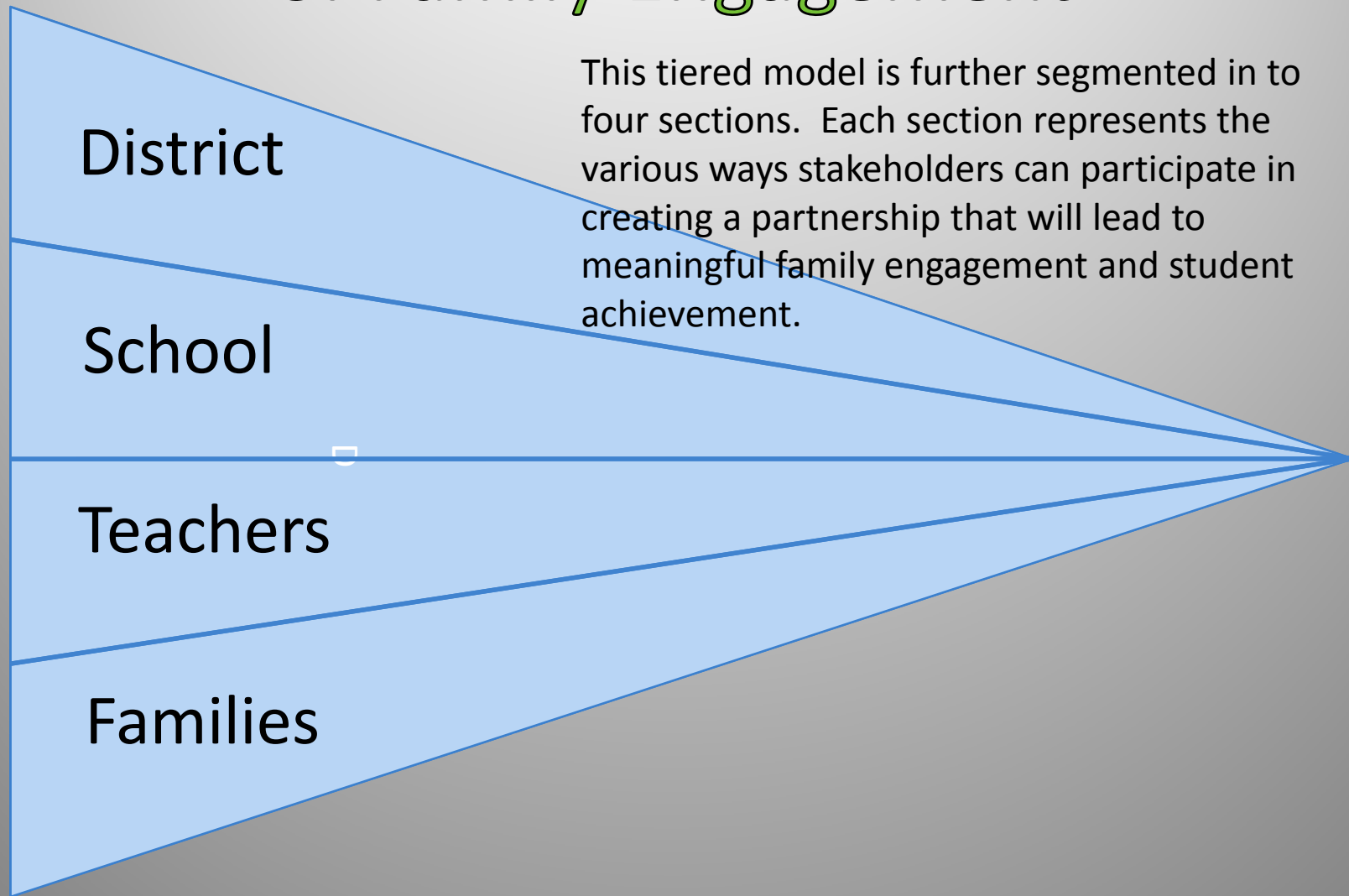


A Tiered Family Engagement Model

A tiered family engagement model that is reflective of the unique needs of both primary and intermediate learners and their families.



Roles and Expectations: A Closer Look at the Shared Responsibility of Family Engagement



For all Learners:

District:

- Provide a Standards-based Report Card system that allows for periodic progress reporting
- Ongoing communication to all stakeholders concerning program development
- Clearly defined grade level expectations for all stakeholders
- Supplying tools/resources/training to support the Family Engagement Model (e.g., student planners/agenda, School Messenger/Skyward, time allocation on calendar for parent-teacher conferences, training all staff on public relations, Parent Education Series, translation and interpretation services, training and development of parent volunteers)
- Build and foster community partnerships that allow for collective ownership of model
- Ongoing evaluation of model through feedback (e.g., annual stakeholder survey reviewed by FEM committee), that reflect on and measure obstacles and outcomes. These would be shared with all stakeholders.

For all Learners:

School:

- Provide a School Newsletter that is informational as well as educational
- Ongoing communication to all stakeholders concerning program development
- Provide Parent Education/Resource Activities facilitated by District, Principal, Staff, PTA and Community Members (e.g., How to access specialists: Counselors/Social Workers, Nurse, ELL, HCL; How to Support Your Learner at Home; Bullying ; Opportunities to Volunteer; Participating in Your School's Garden)
- Provide opportunities throughout the year for families to participate and engage in school culture (e.g., Meet and Greet, Open House, Curriculum Night, Goal Setting Night, Exhibition of Student Learning...)
- Provide and encourage a respectful, interactive and inviting school culture that allows for collaboration opportunities

For all Learners:

Teachers:

- Provide ongoing communication to families (both informational and educational: e.g., newsletters, notes, email, phone calls, texts and blogs)
- A parent-teacher conference – at least once a year
- Use a standard-based reporting system
- Provide opportunities for families to participate in their child's learning (i.e. Volunteering in the classroom, Fieldtrips, Math Night, Exhibition of Learning...)

For most students and families, this model of engagement is effective.

For Some Learners:

School/Teacher/Families:

- Additional conferences and or communications
- More frequent monitoring and reporting of student progress
- School and community intervention and support (e.g., Back on Track, WWU tutors, Big Brothers and Sisters, Compass to Campus, Operation School Bell...)

For students who need additional support, more frequent communication may be necessary.

For a Few Learners:

Team Approach : (District/School/Staff/Families)

- Child Study Group/Focus of Concern
- Site and/or District Specialist as intervention team member
- Regular scheduled feedback and progress monitoring

For students who need intensive support, this additional method of engagement may be necessary.

An Example of Family Engagement: Teacher X

For All Students

- Uses a standards-based reporting system
- Engages families by communicating informational news once a week via group email out to parents, e.g., “We have a field trip next Wednesday! Don’t forget a sack lunch for your child...”
- Shares ways families can connect with their child’s learning by sending home an educational newsletter once a month that directly relates to current unit of study e.g., “How to Use Predicting as a Reading Strategy”
- Holds parent-teacher conference with each family during the first four months of school utilizing District designated calendar time.
- Provides opportunities for parents to volunteer in the classroom.
- Invites families to participate in school-wide family education activities
- Establishes and maintains family partnerships with support from District/School leadership, accompanied by professional development, as necessary, to build a commensurate school culture

An Example of Family Engagement: Teacher X

For Some Students

- Supports struggling students by engaging families:
 - Via email or phone communication
 - By initiating additional conferences as necessary
 - In discussions about appropriate interventions
 - In a way that encourages increased parent participation and understanding
 - In a discussion specific to student learning goals or broader concerns

An Example of Family Engagement: Teacher X

For a Few Students (e.g., students that exhibit unsafe behavior; previous interventions have not worked)

- Supports struggling students by engaging all stakeholders:
 - To work together with District Behavioral team to develop a behavior plan
 - To participate in a Child Study Group
 - To develop a Focus of Concern plan
 - To request a Site and/or District Specialist as an intervention team member
 - To ensure regular, scheduled feedback and progress monitoring

Recommendations

- Adoption of Tiered Family Engagement Model
- Clarity of elementary conference window dates:
 - Calendar time designated for FE preparation and conferences: September through December-actual dates to be shared with stakeholders as soon as possible
 - Clarify purpose and length of FE conference
- Balance the need for time in support of individual teacher planning/prep, PD, and Family Engagement
- Year-round support for schools/teachers/teams to build and maintain FEM
- Continued stakeholder involvement in assessing Family Engagement Model
- Ongoing, continuous and clear communication regarding program implementation and development as appropriate to staff and families
- Continued partnership with BEA, District and Community

Resources

- Beyond The Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family - School Partnership, Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies. New York , The New Press, 2007.
- Elementary Conferences Family and Staff Surveys, via Survey Monkey. Bellingham Public Schools, May 2012.
- The Family Engagement for High School Success Toolkit: Planning and implementing an initiative to support the pathway to graduation for at-risk students. Sponsored by Harvard Family Research Project, AT & T, and United Way. 2011.