

# Integrating Family-Engaged Learning Opportunities into Training

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2023 OSEP LEADERSHIP AND PROJECT DIRECTORS' CONFERENCE





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# Moving From Involvement to Partnerships

- Family involvement is a cornerstone of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- Relational process that is built on trust and mutual respect where all members share in decision-making and responsibility for student success



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(IDEA, 2004; see Sec. 300.322; Sheridan et al., 2019)



# Benefits of Partnering with Families

- Students
  - Better attendance
  - Improved grades, attitudes, social skills
  - Reduced drop out
- Families
  - Increased self-confidence and empowerment
  - Improved parenting skills
- Teachers
  - Improved communication and problem resolution
  - Increase morale and retention- teachers prefer to work in schools where student behavior and parent engagement are high, over a school with higher salary
  - Reduced tension and barriers between families and school personnel



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(Marotz & Kupzyk, 2018; Learning Point Associates and Public Agenda)



# Need for Pre-Service Preparation

- Many enter the profession without the skills necessary to facilitate partnerships with families and offer support and resources to parents as they navigate the special education system
- Strassfeld (2019)
  - “When teachers are poorly equipped with the basic skills to communicate effectively with parents, to offer support and resources to parents as they navigate the special education system, or to share and disseminate knowledge regarding advocacy and mediation remedies available under law when disputes arise, parents lose an opportunity to tap into the potentially rich resources and knowledge of a special education teacher” (p. 284).



# Need for Pre-Service Preparation Cont.

- Less than half of special educators report feeling very confident to engage diverse families
- Culturally and linguistically diverse families often experience additional barriers (e.g., language, parental disregard, resources, deficit-based perspectives)
- Related service personnel report a need for increased training related to cultural diversity and competence.

(Burke & Goldman, 2018; Fowler et al., 2019; Beulieu et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2017)



# National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement Core Competencies

## Reflect

- 1: Respect, honor, and value families
- 2: Embrace equity throughout family engagement

## Connect

- 3: Build trusting, reciprocal relationships with families
- 4: Foster community partnerships for learning and family well-being

## Collaborate for Learning

- 5: Co-construct learning opportunities with families
- 6: Link family and community engagement to learning and development

## Lead Alongside Families

- 7: Take part in life-long learning
- 8: Advocate for systems change



# Family-Engaged Activities

- Established collaborations with community organizations (University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Parent Training and Information Center)
- Outlined valuable activities
  - Family panel
  - Individualized discussions with families
  - Partnering with families to supporting learning at home
  - Social identity wheel and Funds of knowledge
  - Problem-based learning scenarios and Family engagement plan





# Reciprocal Benefits of Activities

- Students
  - Increased understanding of family perspectives
  - Increased confidence in partnering with families
  - Strongly recommended the activities be used for future students.
- Families
  - Benefits of sharing their story to support future professionals
  - Expanding advocacy skills



# Future Directions

- Development of comprehensive family-engaged learning curriculum
- Require field experience focused on family engagement for teachers and related service providers
- Require accountability and evaluation of family engagement in schools; Use data to identify and address equity concerns

(National Association for Family School and Community Engagement, 2020)



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# Resource Spotlight

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) website
  - Brings together IDEA information and resources from the Department and its grantees.
  - <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>
- IDEAS That Work
  - For information from research to practice initiatives funded by OSEP that address the provisions of IDEA and ESSA. This website includes resources, links, and other important information relevant to OSEP's research to practice efforts.
  - <https://osepideasthatwork.org/>





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