

CAEP Family Engagement Overview

Introduction

Family engagement plays a vital role in education, highlighting the collaboration between families and educators to support student learning and success. Through family engagement, caregivers and teachers share responsibility, fostering meaningful interactions to enhance students' educational experiences and outcomes. Additionally, effective family engagement practices help educators understand and appreciate the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of their students' families, leading to more culturally responsive teaching approaches. This overview explores the importance of family engagement, its impact on teachers, families, and students and the role it plays in preparing educators to effectively engage with families.

Definition of Family Engagement

Family engagement highlights the shared responsibility of both families and educators to collaborate in supporting student learning. It is characterized by meaningful, respectful partnerships between families and schools aimed at improving the educational experiences and success of students (Mutch, & Collins, 2012). At its core, family engagement involves caregivers' active participation in students' learning and instruction (Hendrick et al., 2023), encompassing various activities where families collaborate with schools to support student learning and development.

Family engagement, compared to parental involvement, entails a more active and influential role, recognizing that individuals beyond parents may play caregiving roles in students' education and well-being. Effective family engagement also involves an emotional investment, suggesting that involvement is just the initial step. The emotional investment in the form of support and setting high expectations positively impacts students' academic engagement. When students perceive an emotional investment from family it fosters a sense of security and self-worth, encouraging them to spend more time on learning activities and develop effective time management skills, ultimately contributing to their academic engagement and success (Liu et al., 2023).

Family engagement practices generally encompass three types: engagement in the home, community, and school. It emphasizes building relationships and positions families as leaders and influencers in students' education. Home engagement, which

includes activities like book reading and parent-child conversations, supports early learning, while community engagement offers opportunities for students to learn about the world through activities such as attending story time at the library or visiting cultural institutions, and school engagement involves activities like volunteering in classrooms, participating in policy councils, or serving as a school liaison (Kelty & Wakabayashi (2020). Family engagement encourages caregivers to actively participate in decision-making processes that affect student outcomes as well as facilitating effective communication between home and school (Naqvi et al., 2015; Ishimaru et al., 2016). It extends beyond parent involvement by recognizing diverse family structures and a wider range of activities impacting student learning both in and out of school. Family engagement, instead, involves interactive and purposeful activities and behaviors that support students in meaningful learning and emotional development (Sheridan et al., 2011). Understanding the importance of family in education underscores the crucial role that families play in supporting student learning and success.

Importance of Family Engagement

Family engagement has a positive impact on families, students, schools, and teachers, as it strengthens relationships, boosts academic achievement, improves school climate, and enhances teacher satisfaction. Family engagement plays an essential role in promoting collaboration by helping to facilitate shared understanding between families and schools (Curry et al., 2023). Research emphasizes the importance of family engagement in improving academic performance, increased school attendance, and enhanced socio-emotional well-being (Fehrer & Tognozzi, 2018; Chan et al.; 2022; Houri et al., 2019). Students whose families are engaged through straightforward and accessible methods demonstrate increased motivation, a stronger work ethic, and a greater sense of responsibility for their learning, as they recognize and value their families' involvement in their learning (Hall, 2020). Additionally, active engagement of families within schools and communities has been shown to foster students' interest in pursuing higher education (Flores et al., 2019).

Family engagement also positively impacts students by offering clear guidelines for families to support classroom learning and shifting outlooks for teachers, families, and students. This results in families recognizing the significance of their input on student achievement, students becoming more receptive to teacher feedback, and teachers benefiting from increased communication and collaboration with families (Hall, 2020). Effective family engagement benefits students through higher grades, improved

attendance and classroom engagement, and increased self-esteem, while providing educators with increased job satisfaction and support from families, and fostering stronger relationships between families and their students as well as better rapport with educators (Ross, 2023). Schools also benefit from improved staff morale and retention, while school districts and communities see reductions in suspensions and high-risk behaviors, increased participation in afterschool programs, and greater involvement of families and youth in decision-making (Ross, 2023).

Family engagement has been found to have significant impacts on the educational success of students from culturally diverse and linguistic backgrounds. Effective family engagement recognizes and supports the diversity of family backgrounds by engaging families in multiple roles, including supporting students' learning, fostering positive self-image, monitoring their time and behavior, modeling lifelong learning, advocating for improved learning opportunities, making educational decisions, and collaborating with school staff and the community (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Family engagement is important in training school personnel to be culturally literate and to effectively handle diverse classrooms, which is essential for engaging parents as learning partners. (Mohamed, 2021). This highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing the contributions of families from all backgrounds in students' education. Additionally, it underscores the need for schools to implement strategies that promote inclusive family engagement practices, ensuring that every family feels welcomed and valued in the educational process.

Preparing Educators for Family Engagement

Family engagement plays a significant role in preservice teacher training, as it prepares future educators to work collaboratively with families and communities. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on evidence-based strategies for promoting family engagement. However, gaps in practice exist where preservice teachers struggle to implement effective family engagement due to limited exposure to diverse family dynamics or insufficient training in culturally responsive practices (Brannon, 2014). Interactive activities, such as simulated parent-teacher interactions, serve as personalized learning experiences that enhance candidates' conference communication skills, assess their content knowledge and instructional planning abilities, and reveal beliefs about family engagement that may not be addressed through traditional instruction (Walker & Legg, 2018). Field experiences and practicum placements offer preservice teachers opportunities to observe and take part in real-world family

engagement activities, enabling them to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations and reflect on their experiences. Additionally, interactions with families and reflection papers on personal biases has been shown to increase preservice teachers' cultural competency which can positively impact their ability to build mutually beneficial relationships with families (Sanders-Smith et al., 2019). Practical experiences provide opportunities for preservice teachers with opportunities to deepen their understanding and support of family engagement.

Conclusion

Family engagement is essential for promoting positive educational outcomes for students, fostering stronger relationships between families and schools, and supporting the professional development of educators. By recognizing the diverse roles families play in supporting student learning and success, educators can create inclusive environments that value the contributions of all families. Preparing educators to effectively engage with families through evidence-based strategies and reflective practices is crucial for creating supportive and inclusive educational communities where families and caregivers feel welcomed and valued.

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Additional Resources

Introduction to Family Engagement

Banks, J., Kea, C., & Coleman, M. R. (2023). Making meaningful connections: Facilitating schoolwide family engagement with culturally diverse families. *Teaching Exceptional Children*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00400599231182048>

Family engagement plays a crucial role in supporting student success, particularly for those with exceptionalities. This article discusses the challenges administrators and school personnel face in building relationships with culturally and linguistically diverse families. Highlighting the emphasis on family engagement in the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the article suggests that special educators, guided by national professional standards, can play a key role in enhancing school-wide family engagement strategies. The article also aims to provide building-level school administrators with planning tools to implement culturally responsive family engagement for families of children with disabilities.

Witte, A. L., Schumacher, R. E., & Napoli, A. R. (2021). Family-school partnerships in elementary school: Working together for kids. NebGuide Nebraska Extension.
[https://extensionpubs.unl.edu/publication/g2330/pdf/view/g2330-2021.pdf#:~:text=Family%2D%20school%20partnerships%20have%20been,3\)%20decreased%20disruptive%20behavior%20concerns](https://extensionpubs.unl.edu/publication/g2330/pdf/view/g2330-2021.pdf#:~:text=Family%2D%20school%20partnerships%20have%20been,3)%20decreased%20disruptive%20behavior%20concerns)

Effective partnerships between families and schools are characterized by shared responsibility, shared goals, and intentional relationships. This article highlights the significance of family-school partnerships for student learning and development, emphasizing that such collaborations are essential for success regardless of students' backgrounds. The article addresses challenges such as cultural and socioeconomic differences, offering strategies to overcome barriers and promote inclusive practices for all families, including those who are LGBTQ or living in rural communities. The article further discusses how nurturing interactions between home and school environments foster improved outcomes for students, including academic and social skills.