

Family Engagement in the Cambridge Public Schools

*Strengthening the Family/School/Community
Partnerships Critical to Student Success*

Cambridge School Committee Presentation
CPS Family Engagement Planning Team
December 1, 2015

The team and our purpose

CPS Family Engagement Planning Team

Melody Brazo Welcoming Schools Coordinator	Kathleen Kelly School Committee School Climate Sub-committee
Chris Colbath-Hess Program Manager for Professional Development	Lori Likis Chief Planning Officer
Michelle Godfrey Director Center for Families	Rosalie Rippey Family Communications Manager
Robin Harris Principal Fletcher Maynard Academy	Nicole Sullivan Family Liaison Peabody School

Planning team purpose

- Facilitate development and implementation of CPS family engagement plan, as recommended by Dr. Karen Mapp
 - Additional recommendations in process
 - Develop family engagement infrastructure at district level
 - Melody Brazo, Welcoming Schools Coordinator
 - Rosalie Rippey, Family Communications Manager
 - Develop a cultural proficiency initiative for CPS
- Support schools as they strive to strengthen family engagement

What is family engagement?

In CPS, family engagement is...

Family engagement is the creation of school, family, and community partnerships that are devoted to supporting every child's education. These partnerships help both families and schools support students' learning. Family engagement requires school/family/community relationships that are culturally respectful and inclusive.

Why is family engagement
important?

“Over 50 years of research links the various roles that families play in a child’s education—as supporters of learning, encouragers of grit and determination, models of lifelong learning, and advocates of proper programming and placements for their child—with indicators of student achievement including student grades, achievement test scores, lower drop-out rates, students’ sense of personal competence and efficacy for learning, and students’ beliefs about the importance of education.”

(Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 5)

Essential to school improvement

A longitudinal, seven-year study of several hundred elementary schools in Chicago found four “essential ingredients”

- Parent-community ties
- Professional capacity
- Student-centered learning climate
- Instructional guidance system

(Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010, p. 203)

Parent-community ties

As defined by these researchers, parent-community ties are measured by:

- Teacher knowledge of student culture
- Teacher ties to the community
- Teacher use of community resources
- Teacher outreach to parents
- Parent involvement in the school

(Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010, p. 233)

Key to success is trust

Relational trust is “the oven heat that transforms the blended ingredients into a full, rich cake.”

(Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010, p. 203)

“Absent the social energy provided by trust, improvement initiatives are unlikely to culminate in meaningful change, regardless of their intrinsic merit.”

(Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010, p. 157)

“In general, we see that as trust grew in schools so did improvements in teachers’ work orientation, the school’s engagement with parents, and the sense of safety and order experienced by students. And the opposite was also true.”

(Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010, p. 146)

Why is a culturally proficient and respectful approach to family engagement important?

“In particular, research shows that initiatives that take on a partnership orientation—in which student achievement and school improvement are seen as a shared responsibility, relationships of trust and respect are established between home and school, and families and school staff see each other as equal partners—create the conditions for family engagement to flourish.”

(Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 5)

“Without attention to training and capacity building, well-intentioned partnership efforts fall flat. Rather than promoting equal partnerships between parents and schools at a systemic level, these initiatives default to one-way communication and ‘random acts of engagement’ such as poorly attended parent nights.”

(Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 6)

“White middle and upper middle class parents were disproportionally represented in MPTO meetings (when compared with their representation in the school population) and were more likely to engage in activities at the school and district levels...In contrast, parents of color and low income and working class parents were more likely to volunteer in their children’s classroom or attend child related meetings and events such as performances and classroom meetings.” (Posey-Maddox, 2014, p.97)

“...some parents received implicit messages that certain forms of parental engagement were more valued than others within the school community despite the efforts of many MPTO members to make the organization more representative of the broader school community.”

(Posey-Maddox, 2014, p.108)

“...low-income and working class parents often support their children’s education through participation in more informal settings that offer them a voice and a sense of purpose, whether that be in the home, their children’s classroom, or in parent groups in which their particular social, linguistic, and cultural resources are valued and built upon.”

(Posey-Maddox, 2014, p. 110)

Creating the CPS family engagement plan

A research-based framework

- Plan based on *The Massachusetts Family, School, and Community Partnership Fundamentals*
 - Framework adopted by the MA Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, June 2012
- Six fundamentals—goal areas foundational to effective family engagement

MA Family, School, Community Partnership Fundamentals

- 1) Welcoming All People
- 2) Communicating Effectively
- 3) Supporting the Success of Children and Youth
- 4) Advocating for Each Child and Youth
- 5) Sharing Power and Responsibility
- 6) Partnering with the Community

An inclusive process

- Self assessed family engagement as a district, with stakeholder vote
 - Families and community, city-wide meeting Oct 2014
 - Family liaisons, Oct 2014
 - Families, Nov 2014 CSAG meeting
 - CET outreach workers, Jan 2015 CET meeting
- Launched school-based assessment process
 - How to develop inclusive, culturally respectful process, city-wide School Council meeting, May 2015
- Conducted action planning workshop, city-wide School Council meeting Nov 2015

A shared district focus

- Fundamental 3: Supporting the Success of Each Child and Youth
 - Linking student work to learning standards which lead to college and career readiness for all students
 - Using standardized test results and other data to inform decision-making about increasing student achievement
 - Helping families support learning at home and at school
 - Promoting out-of-school-time learning

A plan for every school

- Action plan created by each school includes:
 - 1) Action Plan Focus and Self-Assessment Process
 - 2) Actions We Will Take (Process Benchmarks)
 - 3) How We Will Know These Actions Are Having the Desired Result (Early Evidence of Change)
- Compilation of school plans becomes the district's family engagement plan

Next steps

- School Councils send final plans to team, Jan 8
- Schools implement action plans, Jan-May
- Team checks in to support and monitor, Jan-May
- All School Councils gather to share and celebrate work and results, May

Measuring our progress

Potential outcome measures

- Attendance data at school events (important but only one indicator)
- Perceptual data from families about the quality of school relationships
- Perceptual data from School Councils about changes they observe in their ability to be more inclusive and hear from those they have not historically heard from

Potential outcome measures

- Linking student work to learning standards
 - Data from students and families about how student learning connected to learning standards
 - Data from community partners about ways partner work is aligned to and in support of learning standards
- Helping families support learning at home and at school
 - Assignment completion data from schools
 - Progress on family/school goals for RTI

Building district capacity

Communication

Family engagement requires effective, two-way communication to build and maintain trust.

- Making information accessible to ALL families
- Responding to families' questions and needs



Responsive communication

- The most important communication to support student learning is the most personal.
- Individual, personal feedback by families can help improve our communications.

Family Engagement Share Your Story



Please join us for an interactive discussion and evaluation of family engagement in Cambridge Public Schools.

What does it mean to you to be an engaged family? What can CPS do to support family engagement?

Building on the family engagement visioning session held in June, we will examine areas of strength and areas of growth, to identify a focus for culturally proficient family engagement efforts. Help us identify the most important bridge that we can build to help families feel they are a welcomed and important part of their child's educational community.



Monday, October 20, 2014

6 – 8:30PM

*Cambridge Rindge and Latin School Cafeteria
459 Broadway, Cambridge*

Can't attend, but want to get involved?
Bilingual and general focus groups are also being planned as part of the evaluation process.

To register for childcare or request more information, please call 617.349.6494 or email FamilyEngagement@cpsd.us.

WWW.CPSD.US



CPS
Cambridge Public Schools

Accessible communication

Accessible language

- Family-friendly language
- Differentiated information
- Translation & interpretation



Using multiple communication channels

- Backpacks, email, website, phone calls

Our systemic approach

“Family engagement cannot be seen as the job of a single person or office, but as a shared responsibility.”

(Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 19)

References

Bryk, A.S., Sebring, P.B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J.Q. (2010). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Mapp, K., & Kuttner, P. (2013). Partners in Education: A dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships. Retrieved November 23, 2015, from <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/framework/>

Posey-Maddox, L. (2014). *When middle-class parents choose urban schools: Class, race & the challenge of equity in public education*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Questions?

Thank you for this opportunity to
present this critically important work