School-Wide Family Engagement Rubric

A robust body of evidence shows that students do better in school and in life when their parents are engaged in their education. It also shows that schools improve faster when families are engaged. Furthermore, the largest predictor of whether families are involved at home and at school are the specific school and teacher programs and practices that encourage and guide families' engagement.

Though it is important, family engagement is not always an easy or clear task. Across the country, both principals and teachers rate the biggest challenge of their work – above maintaining discipline, getting sufficient resources, and preparing students for testing – as communicating with and involving parents[1]. But what, exactly, does this communication and involvement look like when it is done effectively?

To help address this challenge, Flamboyan Foundation is offering this School-Wide Family Engagement Rubric. The purpose of this tool is to:
- Illustrate what effective family engagement looks like and provide examples in stages of development
- Help schools focus and prioritize their family engagement efforts
- Help schools learn and generate new ideas and strategies for family engagement
- Guide Flamboyan Foundation's technical assistance and professional development support for schools and school staff

This tool is divided into three main strategy areas that work together to help students and schools be successful. These areas are:
1. Creating a welcoming and engaging climate with strong relationships and communication between families and school staff
2. Partnering with families to support student achievement
3. Investing families in school success

Within each strategy area are a set of objectives for family engagement, progressing through four stages of development. Promising practices and strategy ideas are included as examples in various stages of each objective. In addition, Appendix A describes some key levers that schools can use to move through the stages of this rubric.

This rubric has been developed based on an extensive research review, through conversations with national and local experts, and from lessons learned from DC schools and principals who effectively engage families. We thank our partner schools, The Office of Family and Public Engagement at DCPS, New Leaders DC Program, and Anne Henderson for their inspiration and valuable feedback in developing this tool.

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[1] Harris Interactive, Inc. (2005). The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Transitions and the Role of Supportive Relationships. New York: The MetLife Foundation.

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Strategy One: Creating a welcoming and engaging climate with strong relationships and communications between families and school staff				

Objective	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
1.1 The school values families as important partners in their students' educations.	School staff believe that families aren't really capable of partnering in their student's education, or that it is more trouble than it is worth to engage families. School staff do not articulate that family involvement is important. **Examples:** • Families describe the school as hostile or unwelcoming to their involvement. • School staff commenting "those families don't care."	School staff believe that families have too many needs or are too busy to partner in their student's education. School staff articulate that family involvement is important, but do not believe it is their job to engage families. **Examples:** • Families describe the school as not really caring if they are involved or not.	School staff believe that most families can be effective partners in their student's education. School staff articulate that family involvement is important and believe that it is their job to engage families. **Examples:** • Families describe the school as committed to engaging families but sometimes unable to do so meaningfully because of other school priorities. • Home-school contact logs regularly collected	School staff believe that all families, if treated respectfully and given the necessary tools, can be effective partners in their student's education. School staff articulate that family involvement is important and believe it is their job to engage all families. They track and continuously improve their family engagement efforts. **Examples:** • Families describe the school as committed to engaging families and making it a priority. • Home-school contact logs regularly collected and analyzed
1.2 The school fosters strong relationships between staff and families.	If school staff reach out to families, it is usually to report something negative. No teachers reach out to learn families' hopes and dreams for their student, experiences with school, cultures, skills, and assets. Teachers do not initiate any contact with families during the school year and families do not	School staff invite families to be engaged, but it is often on their own terms. Few teachers reach out to learn families' hopes and dreams for their student, experiences with school, cultures, skills, and assets. Teachers do not initiate regular contact with families during the school year. Teachers ensure that	Most school staff invite families to be engaged in their student's education in respectful and affirming ways. Most teachers reach out to learn families' hopes and dreams for their student, experiences with school, cultures, skills, and assets. Teachers initiate consistent, positive contact with most families throughout the school year. Teachers	All school staff invite families to be engaged in their student's education in respectful and affirming ways. All teachers reach out to learn families' hopes and dreams for their student, experiences with school, cultures, skills, and assets. Teachers initiate consistent,

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know how to reach teachers. **Examples:** • Less than 30% parent-teacher conference attendance • Calling home only about poor academic performance or misbehavior	families can contact them and are in touch with the families who do so. **Examples:** • 30-59% parent-teacher conference attendance • Meeting times scheduled around staff availability only	make themselves accessible to families at flexible times and provide multiple ways for families to get in touch. **Examples:** • 60%-90% parent-teacher conference attendance across groups • Home visits • Regular positive phone calls • Teacher-parent communication at pick-up and drop-off • Meeting times scheduled around parent availability	positive contact with *all* families throughout the school year. Teachers make themselves accessible to families at flexible times that are clearly communicated and provide multiple ways for families to get in touch. **Examples Stage 3 plus:** • More than 90% parent-teacher conference attendance across groups • Parent teacher conferences in the community • Families observing or volunteering in classrooms
1.3 The school leader models strong interpersonal skills with families.	The school leader is not visible or available to families inside the school building. He or she makes no effort to interact with families. If conflicts arise, the school leader lacks the interpersonal skills to problem-solve with families. **Examples:** • During meetings, family concerns yield frustration or non-productive behaviors • School leader always in office	The school leader is occasionally visible and available to families inside the school building, but does not make much effort to greet families or create opportunities to interact with them throughout the year. If conflicts arise, the school leader sometimes engages families in collaborative problem-solving, though there is no clear plan for action. **Examples:** • School leader appearing uncomfortable in front of families	The school leader is sometimes visible and available to families inside the school building and greets families warmly when he or she sees them. He or she is pro-active in creating opportunities to interact with families throughout the year. If conflicts arise, the school leader usually engages families in collaborative problem-solving that results in a plan for action. **Examples:** • Principal coffees • Principal office hours • Principal greeting families at arrival and dismissal	The school leader is usually visible and available to families at school, and in the community, and greets families warmly when he or she sees them. He or she is pro-active in creating opportunities to interact with families frequently throughout the year, which include sharing information as well as seeking families' ideas and feedback. If conflicts arise, the school leader engages families in collaborative problem-solving that results in a plan for action. He or she follows-up with families and/or staff to inquire about whether the plan is working and to adjust as needed.

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				Examples Stage 3 plus: • Families have consistent experiences how they are treated across school staff • Principal-led community walkthroughs • Policy for conflict resolution
1.4 The school's family engagement approach is inclusive and equitable.	The school does not pro-actively reach out to engage its families. The school does not know how to get in touch with families. The school does not have a system in place for ensuring that families receive timely information or that it is accessible or understandable for families. **Examples:** • Accurate contact information for less than 50% of families • No translation or interpretation available • A lot of education jargon in written materials	The school makes initial efforts to engage families, but does not sustain these efforts or change course if families are unresponsive. The school knows how to get in touch with most families, but not how they prefer to communicate. The school has a system in place for ensuring families receive regular information. Home-school communication is not consistently accessible or understandable for families. **Examples:** • Accurate contact information for 50%-74% of families • Inequities in how much time and attention is devoted to some groups of families • Pockets or "cliques" of families that do not interact with one another • Families feeling "drowned out" by other families at the school	The school makes sustained efforts to engage families and tries new ways to engage families if they are unresponsive. The school successfully reaches most families, but sometimes is not able to reach their "hardest to reach" families. The school knows how to get in touch with most families and how they prefer to communicate. The school has a system in place for ensuring that families receive timely information. Home-school communication usually meets the literacy, language, and media preferences of families. **Examples:** • Accurate contact information for 75%-90% of families • Written materials using simple language & sentences • Translation and interpretation, as needed • Governance and advisory bodies representative of the diversity of the school • Robo-calls, text messages, email	The school is relentless and creative in ensuring that every student's family, regardless of their circumstances, is engaged in the success of their student. The school knows how to get in touch with most families and how they prefer to communicate. Home-school communication consistently meet the literacy, language, and media preferences of families and is differentiated for ELL, low-literacy, or other "hard-to-reach" families if needed. **Examples (Stage 3 plus):** • Accurate contact information for > 90% of families • System to regularly update contact information • Visuals accompanying written materials • Parent-to-parent phone trees and parent phone directory

			communication, and school website	
1.5 The school has a family-friendly climate.	School staff are not polite or are actively defensive toward families when they contact the school for guidance or assistance. The school is not very well maintained nor is it set up so that families can easily enter and navigate the building. **Examples:** • Families treated rudely or disrespected in the school • Ignoring families who come into the front office • School entrances, front office, classrooms, and additional facilities not marked • Over-use of prohibitory signs (i.e. NO ONE BEYOND THIS POINT, FACULTY ONLY) • Front office staff raising their voices to families • Decaying building furniture	School staff make families wait or do not provide appropriate help when families contact the school for guidance or assistance. The school is clean and well-maintained and is set-up so that some families can easily enter and navigate the building, though those unfamiliar with it may have difficulty. **Examples:** • Failure to return families' phone calls • Leaving families' calls on hold for extended time • Front office staff ignoring families	School staff are helpful in answering families' questions and concerns when families contact the school for guidance or assistance. School staff respond to families' outreach in timely and helpful ways. The school is physically inviting to families and is set up so that all families can easily enter and navigate the building. **Examples:** • Front office staff following DCPS *Customer Service Essentials* • School entrances, front office, classrooms and additional facilities clearly marked • Bulletin board in lobby for parent information • Signs in families' native language(s) • Clear and consistent visitor policy • Student work displayed throughout the school	All school staff are warm and welcoming towards families when contacted for guidance or assistance. School staff are helpful in answering families' questions and concerns. School staff respond to families' outreach in timely and helpful ways. The school is physically inviting to families and is set up so that all families can easily enter and navigate the building, and so that they can use designated spaces. **Examples Stage 3 plus:** • Parent visitors personally greeted by name and assisted by front office and security staff • School map in lobby and arrows lead the way to important locations • Responses to parent outreach within 24 hours • Photos of families displayed • Designated place(s) in the school for families to use

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Strategy Two: Partnering with families to support student achievement				

Objective	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
2.1 The school prioritizes engagement opportunities that empower families to drive student achievement.	Family engagement is not a priority for the school. School communication and engagement opportunities are rare or sporadic, so families struggle to prioritize and understand their relevance for their student. **Examples:** • Families not knowing what is going on at school	Family engagement efforts at the school are largely focused on getting families to participate in meetings or events or help the school. School communication and engagement opportunities are irregular or too frequent, so families struggle to prioritize and understand their relevance for their student. **Examples:** • Families not attending important events because they feel like a waste of time • Potlucks • School-wide student concerts, plays, or field day • Class parties • Fundraising activities • Families making copies or doing other administrative duties • Flyers sent home almost everyday	Family engagement efforts at the school are broadly tied to learning and instruction. School communication and engagement opportunities are systematized, so families can prioritize and understand their relevance for their student. **Examples:** • General instructions like "read with your student at home" • Literacy or math nights • Author's cafes • Families chaperoning field trips • Families supporting learning centers in classrooms or reading with students • Communications color-coded based on importance	Family engagement efforts at the school are centered on learning and instruction and specific student goals and progress. School communication is systematized, streamlined, and differentiated, so families can prioritize and understand their relevance for their student and take actions to support their success. **Examples:** • Back-to-school night used to introduce systems to share data and student performance information • Literacy nights providing individual students' scores and differentiated information based on student performance • "Tuesday folders"
2.2 The school invests families in setting student academic	Few or no teachers know what families' hopes and dreams are for their students. Few or no teachers share annual goals for students with families. Families receive information on	Few or no teachers know what families' hopes and dreams are for their students. Some teachers share annual goals for students with families. In addition to the required	Most or all teachers know what families' hopes and dreams are for their students. Most or all teachers share annual goals for students with families. Teachers share regular	Most or all teachers know what families' hopes and dreams are for their students. Most or all teachers share annual goals for students with families and co-construct interim goals with families. They communicate

goals and monitoring progress.	their student based on the bare minimum required by the school, local/state policies, and federal policies. This information usually comes at the end of the grading period when little can be done about it.	information at the end of the grading period, families receive some information about how their student is doing. **Examples:** • Sending home quizzes, tests, and graded homework periodically • Sending a note or call home if there are issues with discipline or homework completion	information with families about how their student is progressing relative to their annual goals. **Examples:** • Families know what their teachers' annual goals are for their students • Goals are not broken down into actionable time frames.	with families about goals and make adjustments as needed. Teachers share regular information with families about how their student is progressing relative to their annual goals, interim goals, and other students. Teachers regularly check for families' understanding of whether their student is on track. **Examples:** • Parent-teacher conferences used to set individual goals with families and check in on specific student progress towards those goals • Monthly or quarterly data-sharing reports for families on how their student is performing (which share scores on DIBELS, GOLD, DC-BAS/CAS, A-Net, formative assessments, etc.) • Technology systems for families to monitor on a weekly basis student grades, homework completion, etc. (i.e., Jupiter Grades, Edline, etc.)
2.3 The school provides information and guidance	The only opportunities for parents to learn about what's happening in the classroom are disconnected from teaching and learning.	School staff and teachers communicate with families at the beginning of the school year about what will be taught in class.	School staff and teachers communicate with families throughout the school year about what is being taught in the classroom.	School staff and teachers regularly communicate with families throughout the year about what is being taught in the classroom and how it is being

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for families to reinforce their student's learning.	School staff and teachers do not provide information to families on how they can support student learning at home. **Examples:** • Parents putting up bulletin boards • Class parties • Parents making copies	School staff and teachers provide general information on how families can support learning at home and on how they can create an environment conducive to learning. **Examples:** • List of grade-level standards sent home • General instructions like "read with your child at home" • Flashcards sent home once a quarter • Partnerships with family literacy and adult education programs	School staff and teachers provide specific suggestions on how families should work with their child at home. This information is tailored to each child and is presented in clear, manageable pieces with concrete examples. **Examples:** • Academic worksheets and graphic organizers with written directions • Guiding questions to ask students when reading • Parent-teacher conferences used to suggest and model specific learning support strategies • Literacy and math nights organized by content/cluster or grade level	taught, as well as involving them in the classroom experience. School staff and teachers provide specific and differentiated suggestions on how and how often families should work with their child at home. Information and activities are tailored to each child's goals and are presented in clear, manageable pieces with concrete examples. Teachers give and solicit feedback from families about how they support learning at home. **Examples Stage 3 plus:** • Mini-lessons of how subjects are being taught in class in person or via YouTube • Classroom observations or showcases • Teacher modeling and demonstration for parents • Student-specific learning support strategies included in monthly data-sharing reports • Interactive homework • Family-supported learning centers
2.4 The school helps families to navigate and guide their	The school does not have any strategies in place to help new families navigate and understand the school.	The school reaches some new families to help them navigate and understand the school. The school makes information on	The school reaches most new families to help them navigate and understand the school. The school makes updated	The school reaches all new families to help them navigate and understand the school. The school makes updated

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student's learning.	The school has no or very limited clear, consistent information available to families about school and school and classroom expectations, policies, and procedures. School staff are not responsive to families that seek information to help them make good decisions about their child's academic and career pathways. **Examples:** • Homework sent home inconsistently • Phone numbers for school offices not publicized	classroom and school expectations, policies, and procedures available to families in writing at the beginning of the year, though the information may be outdated. School staff are responsive to families that seek information to help them make good decisions about their child's academic and career pathways. **Examples:** • Guidance counselor returns parent calls • Discipline policy sent home	information on classroom and school expectations, policies, and procedures available in more than one format to families at the beginning and throughout the year. Programs and/or information are pro-actively available to families to help them make good decisions about their child's academic and career paths. **Examples:** • Parent handbook sent home and available on the school website • Monthly school bulletin • Homework hotline • In middle school, families participating in high school fairs, tours, and application processes • In middle and high school, families participating in developing an Individual Graduation Plan • In middle and high school, families participating in high school and college tours and information sessions	information on school and classroom expectations, policies, and procedures available in multiple formats to families at the beginning and throughout the year. The school has consistent communications systems to inform families about important issues, events, and opportunities to be involved. Differentiated programs and/or information are regularly and pro-actively available to families to help them make good decisions about their child's academic and career paths. The school has a clear process in place to support the transition of students out of school **Examples (Stage 3 plus):** • "New parent" orientation or buddy system • Weekly classroom communication about upcoming homework and topics being taught • Updated school calendar distributed monthly • For middle and high schools, workshops to navigate high school and college application process

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Strategy Three: Investing families in school success

Objective	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
3.1 The school informs families about the state of the school and the plan for improvement.	The school does not provide information about its performance to families or the community. The school does not share information with families about the school's goals and what strategies it is using to improve.	The school provides information about its performance to families, but may be selective about the information it shares, especially if it is struggling. Or, the school shares the information, but in a way that is inaccessible to families. The school shares information about the school's goals and what strategies it is using to improve with families that serve on the school governance or advisory bodies or with those that seek the information out. **Examples:** • Families cannot articulate whether their school has improved or declined over time • Few families know about the school's priorities for improvement • AYP letters sent home • Highly Qualified Teacher letters sent home	The school is transparent and honest with families about its performance. The school holds a well-publicized meeting and sends school performance information home to families in written form. The school pro-actively shares information about the school's goals and what strategies it is using to improve with families via written documents that are distributed. **Examples:** • Families articulate whether the school has improved or declined over time • Families understand school goals • Annual school improvement meeting for families • Principal "chat and chews" with families	The school is transparent and honest with families about its performance relative to other schools. The school uses multiple, creative ways to ensure this information reaches and is understood by all families. The school pro-actively shares information about the school's goals and what strategies it is using to improve via multiple formats and opportunities and through multiple messengers, including via the LSAT and other families. **Examples Stage 3 plus:** • Families articulate whether the school is below average, average, or above average in its performance, and how any sub-groups are doing compared to other schools • Families understand improvement strategies to reach school goals • LSAT helping with outreach to inform parents of school goals and strategies • Data walls • "State of our school" forums and reports sent home

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3.2 The school seeks families' participation in planning for and contributing to school improvement.	The school does not solicit or respond to families' ideas for improving the school. The school does not involve families in developing the school's plan for improvement. The school does not provide families with opportunities to volunteer or participate in activities to improve the school. **Examples:** • Families' ideas go unaddressed or are rebuffed by school leader • Comprehensive School Plan unknown to families	The school rarely solicits families' ideas for improving the school, but is usually responsive to them. The school involves families in developing the school's plan for improvement by getting their input at one point in time. These families are not representative of the whole school community. The school is responsive to families who want to volunteer or participate in activities to improve the school. These opportunities are rarely connected to priorities identified in the school's improvement plan. **Examples:** • When families are persistent, their ideas are addressed • PTA not focused on school goals	The school usually solicits and responds to families' ideas for improving the school. The school involves families in developing the school's plan for improvement at a number of points in time. These families are representative of the whole school community. The school is responsive to families who want to volunteer or participate in activities to improve the school. These opportunities are usually connected to priorities identified in the school's improvement plan. **Examples:** • School governance/advisory group meetings held regularly • Beginning of year visioning meeting • Planning meetings between families and the principal • PTA focused on school goals • School-wide strategic planning meetings	The school consistently solicits and responds to families' ideas for improving the school. The school involves families in developing the school's plan for improvement through a clear, multi-staged process. These families are representative of the whole school community and regularly communicate with other families to get and share ideas and feedback. There are norms and capacity-building opportunities in place so families can act as equal partners. The school is responsive to families who want to volunteer or participate in activities to improve the school, and actively recruits and supports families to do so. These opportunities are consistently connected to priorities identified in the school's improvement plan. **Examples Stage 3 plus:** • Input collected on families' aspirations for the school • Helping families network and/or get resources to contribute to school improvement • Surveys, focus groups, and other methods to solicit families' ideas about challenges and solutions

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Appendix A: Key Drivers for Family Engagement

This rubric lays out the mains strategy areas, objectives, and stages of growth for a school's family engagement efforts. Moving from one stage to another across the rubric, however, requires hard work from school administrators, teachers, and support staff. Some of the key strategies to "drive" these changes are:

Leadership
The school leader sets the tone for staff and consistently models that he/she values family engagement.

Family Engagement Action Planning
A representative group of administrators, families, and teachers meets throughout the year to develop and monitor a family engagement action plan for the school. This group plans family engagement based on the school's academic outcomes and regularly reports to the school community on its progress.

Staff Expectations
There are clear expectations that school staff should engage families and how they should do so. All faculty and staff, including new staff, can articulate why family engagement matters and their responsibilities to engage families effectively in supporting their student's education. F

Performance Monitoring
There are transparent systems and metrics in place to track how staff members are performing in family engagement relative to expectations. Data is collected multiple times a year from all teachers, school staff, and families about the extent and impact of their current family engagement practices, challenges, and priority areas for additional support related to family engagement. The school leader consistently uses this data to hold staff accountable for family engagement.

Staff Development
There are consistent opportunities for staff to participate in professional development or job-embedded coaching on how to engage families. Professional development and coaching is responsive to how each staff member is performing relative to the expectations set by the principal.

Continuous Improvement
The school uses data to assess the outcomes of its family engagement efforts and adjust course as needed. Family engagement is discussed during faculty meetings so staff can share promising practices and collectively troubleshoot challenges.

Systems and Structures
The school develops the operational capacity needed to support family engagement through clear systems and structures that help remove barriers to family engagement and align and coordinate efforts across the building.

Logistical Support
The school ensures that school staff always have the time, space, and resources to engage families. Similarly, the school ensures that family-focused outreach and programs are held with the time, space, and resources so that families can engage.