

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT LEARNING SERIES

# Family Engagement to Support Student Success

Welcome to the Family Engagement Learning Series briefs! These briefs summarize a six-part webinar series of conversations designed to Raise the Bar for family engagement practices between school and home. The 2023 series produced by the U.S. Department of Education in partnership with Carnegie Corporation of New York and Overdeck Family Foundation, provided an overview of evidence, highlighted bright spots in the field, and shared resources and evidence-based strategies to support student success with education leaders and practitioners.

## Introduction

“[Raise the Bar: Lead the World](#)” is the U.S. Department of Education’s call to action to transform public education and unite around what truly works — based on decades of experience and research — to advance education equity and excellence. Achieving academic excellence for all students is a key focus area under Raise the Bar, with a focus on assisting states and districts in achieving academic recovery and excellence by supporting the conditions to [accelerate learning](#) and offer a [comprehensive and rigorous education](#) for every student.

We believe parents, families, and caregivers are essential partners in supporting student success. Research finds that strong partnerships between home and school lead to increased academic success and engagement for students. Thus, the U.S. Department of Education is committed to [Raising the Bar for Parent Partnership in Our Schools](#).

While student achievement is a priority, on average, students are two to four months behind in reading and math because of the pandemic. Students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and students



who are presently and historically underserved are even further behind. The research, strategies, and resources presented in this webinar highlight how family engagement approaches have led to increased student success and learning acceleration.



## Evidence: Family Engagement to Support Student Success

The first webinar in the series, [Family Engagement to Support Student Success](#), was moderated by [Dr. Karen Mapp](#), Senior Lecturer on Education at Harvard Graduate School of Education.



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the webinar

Dr. Mapp shared key evidence from the book [Everyone Wins!: The Evidence for Family-School Partnerships and Implications for Practice](#), which included:

- Over 50 years of research clearly show the impact of full and equitable relationships between schools and families and the benefit for students, educators, families, schools, districts, and communities.
- Research confirmed the high-impact nature of strategies such as the [Dual Capacity-Building Framework](#). This remains a research-based framework for family-school partnerships.
- Bringing together families, educators, and community members supports student achievement in math and literacy and creates positive outcomes for everyone. Specifically:
  - › **Outcomes for Students:**
    - Higher grades and test scores.
    - Better attendance and engagement in class.
    - More positive attitudes and behavior.
    - Greater sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem.
    - Higher graduation rates and college/postsecondary attendance.
  - › **Outcomes for Educators:**
    - Shift from deficit to asset-based thinking about students and families.
    - Increased multicultural awareness and appreciation.
    - Creating success, motivating, and engaging students.
    - More support from families.
    - Stronger morale and professional satisfaction.



- › **Outcomes for Schools:**
  - More positive school climate.
  - Higher morale and greater teacher retention.
  - Improved facilities, curriculum, and programs.
  - More responsive to community concerns.
  - Better reputation and support from the community.
- › **Outcomes for Districts and Communities:**
  - Reduced suspensions and high-risk behaviors.
  - Increased family and youth involvement in site-based decisions.
  - Expanded mental and physical health resources leading to improved health.
  - High levels of participation in after-school programs.
  - Increased high school graduation rates.



**We see wins for our families now. We see that our families are able to have stronger relationships with their children because they know more. Because we are exchanging information with their families, they know more about how to support their children's learning.**

- DR. KAREN MAPP

## Learnings from Bright Spots

The webinar showcased examples that demonstrated deep partnerships between school districts and organizations to support academic success through family engagement, including:

- [Alejandro Gibes de Gac](#), Springboard Collaborative;
- [Carlen Powell](#), Los Angeles Unified School District;
- [Vidya Sundaram](#), Family Engagement Lab;
- [Elisabeth O'Bryon](#), Family Engagement Lab; and
- [Willa Smith](#), DeSoto Parish School Board.

## Key Takeaways and Strategies

There are several evidence-based programs that respect the capacity of educators and tap into the teaching potential of parents to help close achievement gaps. Below are some of the considerations from the bright spots that could help bridge the gap between teachers and families:



- Advocate for required family engagement in schools, districts, and state policies (i.e., budgets, professional development, teacher licensure, and teacher planning time). This can be a cost-effective and culturally responsive way to improve student outcomes.
- Build meaningful relationships between educators and families by providing opportunities for building trust.
- Offer family engagement opportunities that are developmentally appropriate (i.e., for elementary, middle, and high school students' families).
- Link family engagement with classroom instruction, breaking down the curricula and standards for parents or guardians in ways that are accessible, taking into consideration different



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**Too many of my colleagues talked about a kid's home life as a risk to be mitigated rather than a resource to be cultivated.**

**- ALEJANDRO GIBES DE GAC**

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language, educational, and cultural backgrounds. This can help families understand how their child is performing relative to their grade level.

- Identify efficient family engagement strategies that leverage teacher time and capacity as an investment in building lasting habits in their children's learning (i.e., how can an hour of a teacher's time translate into several hours of parental instruction at home?).
- Set challenging yet manageable goals for parent partnership, establishing opportunities for ongoing practice, and measuring progress toward that goal as critical steps for improving student outcomes.
- Present strategies to families that are easy to do daily, tailored to their interests, and responsive to their feedback.
- Leverage technology to make setting goals and identifying resources easier for teachers in support of individualized learning experiences.
- Find innovative and accessible ways to communicate with families. Think about tools that allow communication in multiple languages and are easy to implement for busy administrators and teachers.
- Generate positivity around learning and ensure there are opportunities to celebrate student achievements and growth.
- Provide supports to both generate deeper conversations at home about content, as well as socioemotional well-being, providing further opportunities for parent-child bonding.
- Honor and acknowledge parental investment and resourcefulness when it comes to their child's learning.



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**Parents are so ready to act, yet parents from underserved student groups, such as English language learners, report receiving less communication from their schools than their more affluent and English-proficient peers, despite being just as committed to their child's academic success.**

**- VIDYA SUNDARAM**

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I think what we can do as a district is to really support people with thinking of other ways to bring families in. So, it's not just the parent conference week, it's not just the workshop, but some of the power in the Springboard family engagement model is that families come into the classroom, into the learning time. So maybe we can make permission and space and time for that to happen. And then even teachers have time to plan for those conversations with families.

- CARLEN POWELL

## RESOURCES

- [Dr. Karen Mapp](#), along with Eyal Bergman, authored a report commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation of New York in 2021, "[Embracing a New Normal: Toward a More Liberatory Approach to Family Engagement](#)", which explored the dynamics and barriers that interfere with family-school partnerships.
- "[Everybody Wins!: The Evidence for Family-School Partnerships and Implications for Practice](#)" (2022)
- Family Engagement Learning Series [summary and links to videos](#)
- U.S. Department of Education's [website](#)
  - › [Resources for parents and educators](#)
  - › [Raise the Bar Priorities](#)
- [Overdeck Family Foundation](#)
  - › [2022 Grantmaking & Impact Report](#)
- [Carnegie Corporation of New York](#)
- Brookings report on the [evolution of family engagement](#)
- [Springboard Collaborative](#)
  - › [Family engagement video](#)
  - › [One-pager](#) about Springboard
- [Family Engagement Lab](#)
  - › [Impact](#) of Family Engagement Lab
  - › Additional FastTalk resource articles detailing [text message approach](#) and [supporting mathematics](#)



This brief is one of a six-part Family Engagement Learning Series produced by the U.S. Department of Education in partnership with Carnegie Corporation of New York and Overdeck Family Foundation. This webinar series provided an overview of evidence, highlighted bright spots in the field, and shared resources and evidence-based strategies to support student success with education leaders and practitioners. For more information, please visit <https://www.ed.gov/raisethebar/parents>.