




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer 

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SUBJECT: Family Engagement High-Impact Practice – Linking to Student Learning

This is the third in an ongoing communication effort to provide school districts with resources for implementing high-impact family engagement practices based on the state's new definition and framework for family engagement titled [Full, Equal and Equitable Partnership with Families](#). This communication addresses strategies for linking family engagement to student learning goals.

The most effective family engagement practices for promoting student success are aligned with learning and developmental goals for students. Parents of all backgrounds want to know how their children are doing and how they can help. Though parents are aware of the importance of engaging with their children's learning, they often have questions about how best to undertake this role.

Connecticut's family engagement framework addresses the need for educators and families to co-create meaningful family engagement programs focused on student achievement. This approach builds upon families' strengths and knowledge in ways that connect families and schools meaningfully to enrich student learning. Effective programs are not only linked to learning but also bring families and staff together so that they can learn from and with each other.

Strategies to Integrate Family Engagement with Teaching and Learning

In order to support learning in the home, families need information that is timely and actionable. The following practices are evidence-based and link family engagement practices directly to grade-level student learning goals, and provide parents and teachers with partnership strategies. These practices are based on the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Evidence-Based Practice Guide for Student/Family/Community Engagement](#).

1. Share Data and Learning Strategies with Families.

A structured grade-level or classroom conversation between teachers and parents is an effective way to form a partnership to improve student learning. The CSDE developed a protocol called [Reach Out to Families: Parent-Teacher Conversations about Learning](#) that guides teachers through a 45 minute conversation with parents. The protocol and accompanying videos include directions for sharing grade-level goals and data with families, modeling teaching practices, allowing parents time to co-create and practice strategies with each other that they would like to use at home, and setting academic goals for their child.

The CSDE's protocol is based on the more in-depth [Academic Parent-Teacher Teams](#) (APTT) model. This national model uses both individual and classroom student data in 75 minute meetings with families that replace traditional parent-teacher conferences. Families gain a hands-on understanding about performance measures, see how their child's performance relates to the class as a whole, and create a data-informed plan to support learning at home. The APTT model has been shown to increase parents' sense of effectiveness, improve teachers' perceptions of families' willingness to support learning goals and improve reading outcomes for children.

2. Maintain Frequent Personal Contact with Families about Learning

Frequent personal contact with families outside of meetings, particularly families of low-achieving students, can have a strong impact on student achievement when that communication is linked to teaching and learning goals. Research has shown that Title I elementary students' reading and math scores improved 40-50 percent faster when teachers routinely practiced high levels of parent outreach that included three specific strategies: meeting with families face-to-face; sending materials on ways to help their child at home; and telephoning/texting routinely about progress.

Additional research has shown that texting is especially effective for families of high-school students. Weekly personal one-sentence messages from teachers about their children's schoolwork, empowers parents to support students' efforts to earn course credit towards graduation. In the process of increasing student-passing rates, this strategy improves student attendance, and shapes outside-of-school parent-student conversations.

3. Take a Systemic Approach to Align Grade-Level Goals and Home Learning Practices

The CSDE developed a model that helps teachers utilize grade-level performance data in collaborating with families to support student learning. Together, teachers and parents co-develop a data-informed partnership plan aligning classroom and family activities that are timely and linked to student learning. The partnership plans include students' input on their own learning goals and suggestions for how their family and teachers can support their learning. This model, adopted by other states including Georgia, Maryland, Nevada, Tennessee and Washington, meets the requirements for Title I School-Parent Compacts but also can be used by any school. [A training Website](#), available for all schools, provides a step-by-step process, coaching videos and downloadable tools.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Judy Carson at judy.carson@ct.gov or 860-807-2122.

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