



# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST

It's important for families and schools to work together to ensure student success. Families will feel and be more involved if they feel that the school is their partner. This easy-to-use checklist has simple ideas to help create and maintain real partnerships.

## CREATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

### PROFESSIONALS

- Make sure your school is warm and friendly for families. This can include making sure the school is clean, well lit, and has plenty of parking. Post signs inside that make it easy for families to get around the school.
- Create a space where families feel welcome and students want to learn.
- Respect the different backgrounds (cultural, language, race, disability) of the families you support.
- Provide resources and support for families who speak a different language and those who have children with disabilities to make sure they feel valued and included.
- Greet families by name when they come for their IEP meetings. Have a comfortable, accessible meeting space. If possible have a round table so that families and staff are not at different ends of the table. This can set the meeting off on the right track.

### FAMILIES

- Introduce and meet with your child's teacher(s) and school administrators, like the principal.
- Support inclusion programs in the school that focus on ensuring that everyone in the school community is respected and valued as an equal member.
- Share your knowledge and skills with the school.
- If you or your child have a disability, share what you know about how to remove physical barriers (like steps) to accessing the school and its activities.
- At IEP meetings, be sure to listen to what others have to say, while making sure your voice is heard. Remember, you are an equal member of the IEP team.

## WAYS TO SHARE INFORMATION

### PROFESSIONALS

- Remember that all families are unique and can include parents (biological, step-parents, foster, adoptive), grandparents, siblings, aunts/uncles, etc. Engage the student's family in a way that is meaningful to them.
- Ask the family about how they prefer to communicate. Don't guess.
- Offer different options like emails, calls, texts, newsletters, social media, websites, or apps. Update families frequently and be sure your updates are visually engaging, and easy to understand.
- At IEP meetings use visuals, simple language, and provide interpreters as needed so families can easily understand and participate as equal partners.

### FAMILIES

- Tell the school how you like to communicate -- email, text, phone call, or by mail.
- Answer school messages as soon as you can to say if you'll be at a meeting or not. Ask for a different date if you can't come. Give any other information that you want to or that the school has asked for.
- Check your child's backpack or the school website every day to see if there is any new information so you know what's happening.
- Let the school know if it is easy or hard to get messages and give the school ideas on how they may be able to make it better for families.
- Let the IEP team know about your child's progress, challenges, or other changes that may affect the IEP or your child's services.

## WAYS TO SHARE THOUGHTS

### PROFESSIONALS

- Ask families about their contacts with frontline staff, teachers, administrators, and their experience at meetings and events.
- Establish a parent advisory council to get parent input.

### FAMILIES

- Participate in school surveys, questionnaires, and meetings. Give timely and helpful information. Be clear and specific when you respond.
- Whenever possible, join school board, PTA, and Special Education Advisory Committee meetings to discuss important decisions about school policies, budgets, and programs.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

### PROFESSIONALS

- Develop a family volunteer program so that family members and other relatives can help in various roles, offering their knowledge and skills.
- Encourage parents/caregivers to join the PTA. This organization supports school activities and initiatives.
- Plan projects with nonprofits and charities so families are aware of community resources.

### FAMILIES

- Look for volunteer opportunities that will help you connect and be involved with your school community.
- Volunteer as a classroom assistant to help the teacher with various tasks and work with the students.
- Support the librarian and school literacy program to help students develop a love for reading.

## WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS

### PROFESSIONALS

- Host workshops and events focused on topics important to families: special education, academic strategies, social-emotional learning, behavior, and transition to adulthood.
- Provide opportunities for parents and caregivers to share and teach programs that match their interests and skills.
- Hold community events in locations that are accessible and convenient for families.
- Host information sessions to tell families what to expect as an equal part of the IEP team.

### FAMILIES

- Let your child's school know about workshop topics that you would like to see offered.
- Share school events with your friends and neighbors and ask them to also share this information with people they know.
- Develop a Circle of Support for your children made up of people who are important in their lives so that you and your child have help when needed. Go to workshops and events to learn new things, find community resources, and meet people in your community. This will help you grow your child of support.
- Tell your child's school when you can go to events and meetings, specifically a timeframe you're available.

## HOMework SUPPORT

### PROFESSIONALS

- Offer resources and examples of age-appropriate study strategies and ways families can support their child's learning.
- Create ways families can seek assistance or clarification on homework assignments and concepts.
- Give families ways to assist with homework assignments.
- Offer homework clubs or tutoring programs where students can get extra help understanding their homework.

### FAMILIES

- Set up a regular homework routine and take away things that may interfere with their work like TVs and electronic devices during homework.
- Help your child learn how to manage their time by blocking time for homework and letting your child take breaks when needed.
- Reach out to teachers if your child is having a hard time with their assignments.
- Be available to your child. Answer questions, provide help, and explain things but also help your child to be more independent by letting them complete their own work. This will help them develop their skills.

## CELEBRATE ACHIEVEMENTS

### PROFESSIONALS

- Recognize and honor students' academic and non-academic achievements with awards and ceremonies. Present certificates, plaques, or rewards to showcase their accomplishments.
- Highlight student achievements in the school newsletter, website, or areas in the school that everyone can see.
- Recognize individual students, with as handwritten notes of praise, shoutouts during morning announcements, and talking to students to motivate them to continue their hard work.

### FAMILIES

- Recognize and celebrate your child's accomplishments, praising their effort and commitment and encourage ongoing success.
- Have a special place at home to show off your child's trophies, certificates, artwork, and other accomplishments.
- Encourage your child to tell their family and friends about what they've achieved. This will make them feel proud and they will be motivated to keep reaching their goals.

## STAY INFORMED

### PROFESSIONALS

- Arrange parent-teacher conferences regularly during the school year to keep families informed about their child's progress. Make sure there are no surprises for parents. If there are problems, they need to know right away.
- Use an online portal for families so that they can get to up-to-date information in real-time about their child's assignments, attendance, and school announcements.

### FAMILIES

- Keep in touch with your child's school using the the ways to communicate that you and the school have agreed to. Make sure that your contact information is current in the school office.
- Stay involved in your child's education by reviewing their homework and school assignments every day.



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