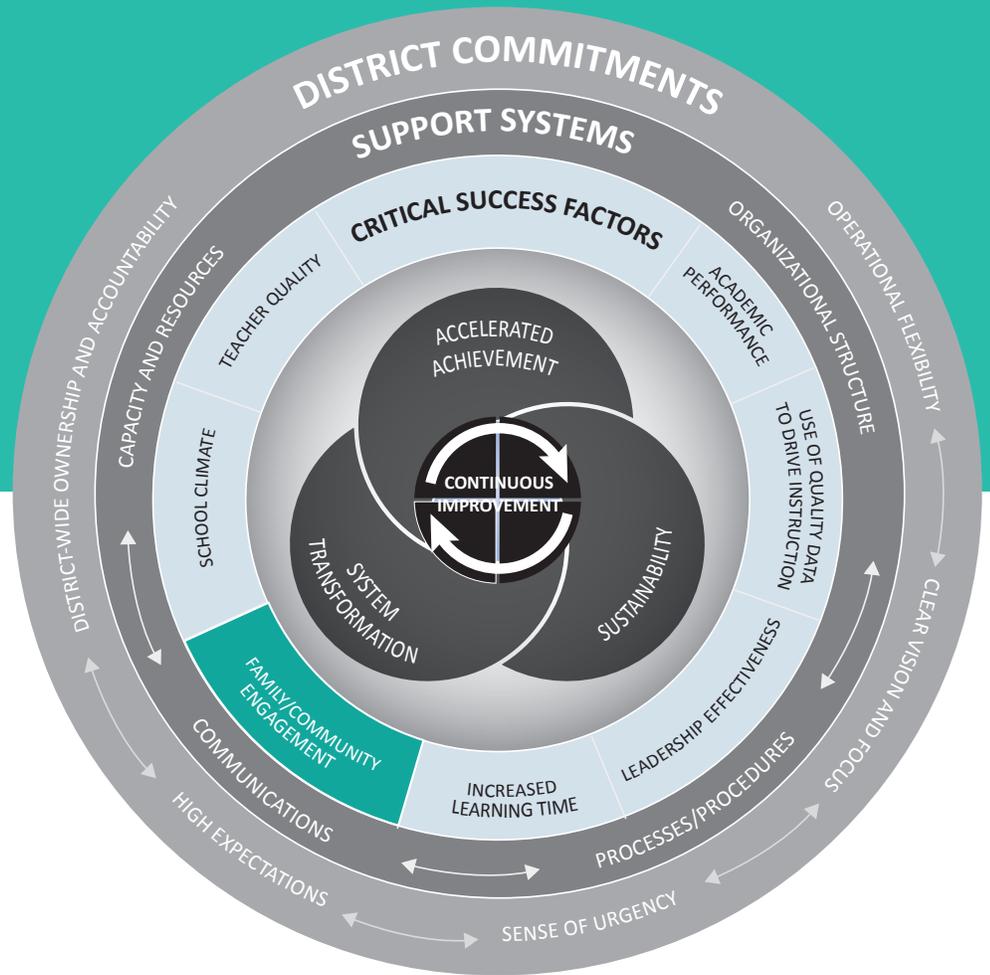


# CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR (CSF) PLANNING GUIDE

# FAMILY/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



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## CSF PLANNING GUIDES ARE INTENDED TO

- Present supporting research that strengthens your knowledge and understanding of the CSF.
- Provide examples of processes and/or strategies to support your implementation of the Texas Accountability and Intervention Strategies (TAIS) framework to strengthen the CSFs on your campus.
- Assist with strategies to determine your strengths and weaknesses for each CSF.
- Identify specific next steps to implement on your campus.

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## BEFORE GETTING STARTED

- If you are working as a group, designate someone to take notes during the discussions to collect ideas and thoughts for your next steps.
- Assign an individual to lead the action plan for *increasing family/ community engagement*.
- Use the activities in the Next Steps section to gather data, identify problems, and determine root causes.

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## AFTER REVIEWING THIS GUIDE, RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING

- What new knowledge do I have about this CSF and how does this information influence my thinking?
- In what ways are the practices at my district/school aligned with strengthening this CSF?
- What do we want to improve and what plan of action is needed to improve?

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## CALL TO ACTION

Develop a working understanding of the CSF

- Organize an instructional leadership team meeting.
- To understand the team's current understanding of this CSF, ask team members what they know about it and record their responses.
- Read this guide using a jigsaw or other text discussion protocol.
- Respond to questions or discussion prompts listed throughout the guide.
- Determine how you want to initiate learning more about the CSF in relation to the TAIS framework. For instance, you could assign team members to read and facilitate the discussions for the different sections of this guide.
- Utilize the TAIS Guidance Documents at [www.tcdss.net](http://www.tcdss.net) as a resource. They include details and specifics for the process.

# FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) framework for school improvement identifies Family and Community Engagement as one of the seven Critical Success Factors (CSFs) and summarizes it as follows:

*“Family and community engagement calls for increased opportunities for input from families and the community, as well as the necessity for effective communication and access to community services. Parent, family and community involvement has a direct correlation with academic achievement and school improvement. When school staff, parents, families and surrounding communities work together to support academic achievement, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school longer and more regularly, and eventually enroll in programs of higher education.”<sup>1</sup>*

“The research is clear, consistent, and convincing: parent, family, and community involvement in education correlates with higher academic performance and school improvement” (NEA Policy Brief, 2008, 1).<sup>1</sup>

This planning guide addresses increasing family and community engagement in these five sections:

- What is family/community engagement?
- Why does family/community engagement matter?
- How do you improve family/community engagement?
- Reflection
- Next steps

## SECTION 1

### WHAT IS FAMILY/ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Federal policies regarding parent family/community engagement have a varied history. The parent involvement policies under [Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act \(ESEA\)](#) were created as a response to the societal changes of the 1960s. Reauthorizations have changed the policies since then, but the goal to increase family and community engagement in schools has remained constant. National attention to family and community engagement was heightened by the No Child Left Behind requirements for Title I schools. The requirements of Title I schools, clearly define what schools and districts must do. Schools that accept Title I funds must use a portion of the funds to create a shared responsibility for student progress by engaging the parents, educators, and the community. As a result, parents become an integral part in developing, implementing, and evaluating Campus Improvement Plans. All districts in Texas are required to include parents, as well as community members, in the improvement planning process.

Family and community engagement varies within schools and districts. The old model of parent involvement meant mostly mothers who volunteered and assisted in the classroom, and with needs like fund-raising. The new model is more representative of families today. In addition to mothers and fathers, family engagement also includes stepparents, grandparents, foster parents, other relatives, and caregivers. The new model also seeks to develop community and business partnerships with schools.

Joyce Epstein, of John Hopkins University, has defined six types of involvement that offer a broad range of collaborative opportunities for schools, family, and communities.<sup>2</sup> She describes how school/community partnerships can be integrated into the mission of the school without being add-on or stand-alone ventures. These partnerships support the success of the school in meeting the needs of the students. Research and fieldwork show that students are more successful when educators, parents, and community partners form a strong coalition.<sup>3</sup> Research has also shown that high-performing schools are associated with a high level of community support.<sup>4</sup>

Epstein's framework on involvement can be used as a tool for educators, to deepen their understanding of school/family/community partnerships:<sup>5</sup>

- **Type 1, Parenting:** Assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families' backgrounds, cultures, and goals for children.
- **Type 2, Communicating:** Communicate with families about school programs and student progress using reliable and effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication.
- **Type 3, Volunteering:** Improve recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs. Enable educators to work with volunteers who support students and the school. Provide meaningful work and flexible scheduling.
- **Type 4, Learning at Home:** Involve families with their children in academic learning at home, including homework, goal setting, and other curriculum-related activities and decisions.
- **Type 5, Decision Making:** Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, and other organizations.
- **Type 6, Collaborating with the Community:** Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with businesses, agencies, and cultural and civic organizations, as well as colleges and universities.

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## CALL TO ACTION

Discuss the six types of involvement listed in Epstein's framework, while considering these questions:

- How does your community define its responsibility for public education?
- What kind of information does your community need to be better informed about your district/school?
- Where does your community get its information about your district/school?

Utilize the TAIS Needs Assessment Guidance document as a resource to determine your strengths and problem areas. The resource can be found at [www.taisresources.net/continuous-improvement-resources/](http://www.taisresources.net/continuous-improvement-resources/). Think about how your strengths might be directed to support improvement in your problem areas. Remember to appoint a scribe to take notes to record your discussion.

Questions to consider:

- How does your community define its responsibility for public education?
- What kind of information does your community need to be better informed about your district/school?
- Where does your community get its information about your district/school?

*“If family involvement is important for student success, as decades of studies indicate, then we must address a harder, but more difficult question: How can more families-indeed, all families-become involved in their children’s education in ways that contribute to student success” (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006)?<sup>6</sup>*

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## SECTION 2

### WHY DOES FAMILY/ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MATTER?

Research has found that in schools a high percentage of motivated, ambitious students correlates with schools with high levels of parent/family/community engagement.<sup>7</sup> Research has also shown correlations with increased attendance, fewer dropouts, improved academic performance, and increased enrollment in higher education programs. Studies show that the benefits of high family/community engagement are present, regardless of school level (elementary or secondary), family income, ethnic background, or parental education.<sup>8</sup>

Though research clearly establishes the benefits of family/community engagement on student learning, campuses and districts planning to improve academic achievement and close achievement gaps often fail to give it a high priority. Many seem blind to this critical success factor for student success.

If policy makers, parents, and community leaders view educating students as solely the job of educators, the full potential of public education will not be realized. Part of the “public” in public education includes the notion that the entire community has a responsibility for all students, as noted in the proverb, it takes a village to raise a child. A good education makes a difference for individual students in a community, but it also makes a difference for the economy and the quality of life of the community as a whole.

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### CALL TO ACTION

Reflect on your experience with family/community engagement in schools. Discuss why you think it matters to student success. Also discuss why districts and campuses often do not make family and community engagement a priority in their improvement planning processes.

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## SECTION 3

### HOW DO YOU IMPROVE FAMILY/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Improving parent, family, and community involvement requires educators to think of new ways to communicate, connect, and engage these stakeholders in the effort to increase student achievement. After working with over 1,000 schools in more than 125 districts, as well as with state and organizational partners in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), Epstein and Sheldon developed seven principles that support a new way of thinking about building partnerships:<sup>9</sup>

- 1. School, family, and community partnerships is a better term than parental involvement.** It recognizes that parents, educators, and others in the community share responsibility for students' learning and development. The theory of "overlapping spheres of influence" improves our depiction of how home, school, and community affect children's education and development. Theory-driven studies that include measures for the multiple major contexts of students' lives are needed.
- 2. School, family, and community partnerships are a multidimensional concept.** A framework of six types of involvement (listed above) guides the development of comprehensive partnership programs. Each type of involvement raises key challenges that must be solved to reach all families and produce positive results. This requires focused and subject-specific measures of partnership practices, and not overly general or superficial measures of parental involvement.
- 3. A program of school, family, and community partnerships is an essential component of school and classroom organization.** Studies need to include measures of schools' actions to implement partnership programs and activities that seek to involve all parents, not only parents' self-initiated actions. In policy and practice, this links family and community involvement directly to the school improvement planning process.
- 4. Programs of school, family, and community partnerships require multilevel leadership.** Districts and states have leadership roles to play in guiding schools to strengthen and sustain programs of family and community involvement. Researchers can use methods of multilevel analyses, for example, to study the independent contributions and connections of district leaders' support and schools' actions to develop their partnership programs.
- 5. Programs of school, family, and community partnerships must include a focus on increasing student learning and development.** When plans for partnerships are linked to school goals for student success, family and community involvement can measurably affect

students' learning and development. This requires measures that assess the quality of program implementation, interim outcomes (e.g., parents' responses), and ultimate outcomes of student achievement, attendance, behavior, health, and other indicators of success. Schools want students to develop academically, socially, emotionally, and physically at each age and grade level; families and communities can help students attain these healthy outcomes.

**6. All programs of school, family, and community partnerships are about equity.**

**7. Methods** of research on school, family, and community partnerships must continue to improve. This includes longitudinal data that accounts for schools, and students' "starting points," as well as matching samples for comparative analyses, path analyses, and multilevel analyses to understand influences on more equitable outreach and involvement. It is important for new studies to attack particularly challenging measurement issues such as isolating the effects of partnerships on student outcomes from other simultaneously occurring school improvements and explaining initially negative associations of some kinds of parental involvement with low student achievement and poor behavior.

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## CALL TO ACTION

Using the seven principles as prompts for new thinking, discuss the following questions and statements:

- In your district/school, how could the term "school, family, and community partnerships" better serve your needs and enhance your program than the term "parental involvement"?
- Reflect on Epstein's six types of involvement and identify ways your district/school might face the challenges in developing partnership programs.
- What school/district actions could increase the involvement of underrepresented parents?
- In what ways does your district leadership support school actions in developing partnership programs?
- What programs are (or could be) in place that connect school/family/community partnerships with increasing student success?
- Brainstorm successful school actions to increase underrepresented parents in their child's learning.
- What are the ways you could measure various kinds of family engagement?

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## SECTION 4 REFLECTION

Hattie found that the most significant effect parents may have on students might be the encouragement and expectations they communicate to their children.<sup>10</sup> The beliefs and expectations of the parents have shown a greater significance for student academic success than other factors in the home. Conversely, if parents do not know the language of learning, then they are not able to communicate their expectations for educational achievement to their children. The dramatic impact parental beliefs and expectations have on student progress compels schools to work with parents in sharing a language for holding high expectations and aspirations for their children.

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## SECTION 5 NEXT STEPS

As students progress through school, parental involvement declines. There are multiple reasons parents may not engage in their child's education. These include demanding schedules, feelings of intimidation from past school experiences, issues related to cultural or language differences, and frustration with school bureaucracies. Despite these reasons, schools have made progress in engaging parents; however, many schools continue to struggle. The 2008 NEA policy brief suggested the following process to develop a plan for action to increase family/community engagement.<sup>11</sup>

### Step 1

The left side of the chart below offers suggested actions. List your ideas for a plan for action on the right side beneath the examples provided.

### Step 2

Go through the chart below and discuss the "Suggested Actions," and list your ideas and identify the top two or three priorities.

### Step 3

Use the TAIS continuous improvement process resource guide to complete a needs assessment to determine the root causes of the family/community engagement problems your district or campus faces.

### Step 4

Based on the root causes, determine an overall strategy and then establish an annual goal. The Improvement Planning Template provides a tool for determining interventions to support achieving your goal. Refer to the Improvement Planning Guidance documents at <http://www.taisresources.net/continuous-improvement-resources/> for help and inspiration.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS	LIST YOUR IDEAS FOR A PLAN OF ACTION
Survey educators and families to determine needs, interest, and ideas about parenting.	Example: <i>Refer to the Needs Assessment guidelines in the TAIS continuous improvement process for reviewing data to determine the root causes of problem areas.</i>
Develop and pass family-friendly policies and laws (e.g., leaves of absence for parents/caregivers to participate in school or education-related activities; flexible scheduling to encourage participation by diverse families.)	Example: <i>Determine what the school/district can do to promote the family-friendly policies in your community.</i>
Provide professional development on family and community engagement to all staff members.	Example: <i>List ideas based on needs assessment and plan for the professional development.</i>
Offer training for parents and community stakeholders on effective communication and partnering skills.	Example: <i>Identify resources available in your community to support this action.</i>
Provide better information to family and community members on school and school district policies and procedures.	Example: <i>Determine ways to communicate with diverse family, parent, and community groups.</i>
Ensure timely access to information, using a variety of effective communications tools that address various family structures and are translated into languages that parents/families understand.	Example: <i>Identify resources in your district/school to support this action.</i>
Hire and train school-community liaisons who know the community's history, language, and cultural background to contact parents and coordinate activities.	Example: <i>Identify resources in your district/school to support this action.</i>
Collaborate with higher education institutions to infuse parent, family, and community involvement in education into teacher and administrator preparation programs.	Example: <i>List available institutions and contacts to begin collaboration.</i>
Develop an outreach strategy to inform families, businesses, and the community about school and family engagement opportunities, policies, and programs.	Example: <i>Coordinate other actions to create a continuous flow of information to all stakeholders.</i>
Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of family/community engagement programs and activities.	Example: <i>Utilize the HB 5 template (referenced below) to assess the effectiveness of your district/school family, parent, and community programs and activities.</i>

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## OTHER RESOURCES

The recent HB 5 requires schools and districts to rate their performance in Community and Parent Involvement. On their website ([www.esc16.net](http://www.esc16.net)), Education Service Center Region 16 offers several sample templates that districts in Texas are using to help meet the requirements of HB 5.

The National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at John Hopkins University has resources ready to assist districts and schools, with their work on building partnerships: [www.pepartnership.org/school,-family,-community-partnerships.aspx](http://www.pepartnership.org/school,-family,-community-partnerships.aspx)

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## MAKING CONNECTIONS TO OTHER CSFS

- Improve Academic Performance
- Increase the Use of Quality Data to Drive Instruction
- Increase Leadership Effectiveness
- **Increase Family/Community Engagement**
- Increase Learning Time
- Improve School Climate
- Increase Teacher Quality

As you review each of the CSF resource guides, notice how they intermingle, interact and blend together. When the organization increases family/community engagement, other factors are involved: Data is used to determine family and community engagement. Effective leadership focuses on increasing family/community engagement. When the family and the community are involved in the district/school, teacher quality and learning time increase, and the school climate improves. Discuss other examples that show how each factor affects the others. For example, how might improving family/community engagement increase learning time or school climate? As you take action on each of the CSFs going through the TAIS process, realize that the CSFs affect each other.

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## NOTES

Page numbers corresponding to the citations are forthcoming

1. NEA Education Policy and Practice Department, "Parent, Family, Community Involvement in Education," An NEA Policy Brief, last modified 2008, [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB11\\_ParentInvolvement08.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB11_ParentInvolvement08.pdf), 1.

2. Joyce Epstein and Steven Sheldon, "Moving Forward: Ideas for Research on School, Family, and Community Partnerships," SAGE Handbook for Research in Education: Engaging Ideas and Enriching Inquiry, ed. Clifton F. Conrad and Ronald C. Serlin (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006), 117-138.

3. NEA, "Parent, Family, Community," 1.

4. Anne T. Henderson, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, (Austin: National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools, 2002), 75-76.

5. Joyce Epstein et al., *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*, (Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, 1997), 41-67.

6. Epstein, "Moving Forward," 117-138.

7. Paul E. Barton, *Parsing the Achievement Gap: Baselines for Tracking Progress*, (Princeton: Policy Information Report, Educational Testing Service, 2003), 6, 35-37.

8. NEA, "Parent, Family, Community," 1.

9. Epstein, "Moving Forward," 117-138.

10. John Hattie, *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analysis Relating to Achievement*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 61-71.

11. NEA, "Parent, Family, Community," 3.

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