



# **Maryland's PreK – 12 Family Engagement Framework: A Shared Responsibility**

DEVELOPED BY:  
DIVISION OF STUDENT, FAMILY AND SCHOOL SUPPORT  
MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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A Shared Responsibility**

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## Overview of Maryland's PreK-12 Family Engagement Framework

### **Introduction**

Over five decades of research continue to demonstrate that family engagement is a powerful influence on student achievement and success. Maryland values the essential role families and community organizations play in supporting positive outcomes for student achievement and their success from birth through school age years.

*Maryland's PreK-12 Family Engagement Framework* is in response to the Division of Student, Family and School Support's operational goal #3: To develop a family engagement framework that will maximize the capacity of educators to work in partnership with families. This Framework is aligned with national research and frameworks around the country including:

- United States Department of Education's Dual Capacity Building Framework
- National PTA Standards
- National Network of Partnership Schools Six Types of Family Involvement Framework
- The Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework: Maryland's Vision for Engaging Families with Young Children
- Federal and State requirements



### **Purpose**

The purpose of the *Maryland PreK-12 Family Engagement Framework* is to influence intentional thinking and actions necessary to implement family engagement policies and practices at the state, district, and school levels. More specifically, the goal of the Framework is to create a structure for educators that promote family-friendly schools where everyone – from teachers to parents – have the tools to support student academic achievement and success by the following principles:

1. *Creating a welcoming environment for all stakeholders*
2. *Encouraging partnerships among schools, families, and communities*
3. *Supporting student learning and success*
4. *Building capacity among school stakeholders*
5. *Promoting effective school-family communication*

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*Maryland has a long history of family engagement support and initiatives. We recognize that schools and school systems have many supports in place for family engagement. The Framework Principles offer a structure and helpful practices for schools.*

## **Vision**

Families, educators, and community members work together as partners, hold themselves mutually accountable, and have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed at improving the achievement of all students.

To achieve our vision, we embrace the following:

- Positive, respectful, and empathetic relationships between school and families are the foundation for successful family engagement strategies.
- Family engagement strategies must be appropriately resourced and designed to meet the specific needs and constraints of all Maryland families.
- Families, educators, and community members *must* be advocates for all children.
- Families, educators, and community members must support children’s learning at home and in school.
- Families, educators, and communities are mutually accountable for improving student achievement by supporting parent involvement.
- The Maryland State Department of Education, local school systems, and schools must provide ongoing training so that parents and educators can be full partners, informed decision-makers, and effective advocates for children.



## **Belief Statement**

There are many definitions and belief statements around family, school, and community engagement. The Family Engagement Core Team adapted the following definition and belief statement from *Maryland’s Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework and the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group*:

*Family engagement is a shared responsibility of families, schools, and communities to support student learning and achievement, continuous from birth through the school-age years. It occurs across various settings wherever children learn--in the home, early childhood settings, school, after-school programs, faith-based institutions, and community programs and activities. Family engagement includes building relationships with families that support their well-being, sustaining strong parent–child relationships, and providing opportunities for ongoing learning and development of both parents and children. As a shared responsibility, schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to engaging families in meaningful and culturally respectful ways, and families are committed to actively supporting their children’s learning and development.*

## **Developing Maryland’s Framework**

Maryland has a long history of family engagement by the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001 and the 2005 recommendations of the Maryland Parent Advisory Council. Maryland continues to expand its family engagement work from cradle to career. Most recently, the Maryland State Department of

Education released the *Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework: Maryland's Vision for Engaging Families with Young Children* developed for early learning providers to demonstrate the imperative role of family engagement in early care and education settings. Likewise, *Maryland's PreK-12 Family Engagement Framework* demonstrates the natural progression of transitioning from early learning settings to formalized school settings by creating a structure for educators that influences family-friendly schools to support student academic achievement, development, and success.

*Maryland's PreK-12 Family Engagement Framework* was developed by a cadre of key educational stakeholder representatives of the early learning, elementary, secondary, special education, English language learners community, parents and others. All members share a common belief in the powerful influence of family, school, and community engagement on student academic achievement, development, and success.

This Core Team met over an 18 month period to develop the Framework by reviewing national research, Federal and State requirements, and existing frameworks across the country. Once the draft Framework was developed, it was disseminated via email to all stakeholder groups at the State, district, and school levels as well as posted on MSDE's website and through MSDE's social media to allow

for public comment and feedback for a three week period. Feedback was considered and used to finalize *Maryland's PreK-12 Family Engagement Framework*.

#### Future Considerations

Maryland's current Family Involvement Policy was accepted by the Maryland State Board of Education in October 2001. The policy provides a general statement of support for parent involvement at the State, district, and school levels which has not been revisited since 2001. This framework will serve as a foundation for the review and revision of the existing policy, and lay the groundwork for future planning of family engagement efforts. Additional resources and training will be developed to support the implementation of *Maryland's PreK-12 Family Engagement Framework*.



## **Maryland's PreK-12 Family Engagement Framework**

### **Family Engagement Principles**

#### **I. *Welcoming All Families***

- Including all students and families
- Engaging families is expected and well received
- Being culturally responsive
- Identifying and removing barriers
- Cultivating a positive climate

Creating an environment where all stakeholders – parents, students, and school staff – feel valued and connected is key to welcoming all families. School leadership, teachers, and staff are instrumental in fostering positive relationships between the school and families to build and sustain a welcoming school environment. Welcoming all families involves a mindset that values cultural proficiency, the importance of diversity, and individual abilities. Understanding and respecting diverse family dynamics and cultures represented in the school community helps to identify and remove barriers and provides opportunities for meaningful engagement.

#### **Examples:**

- ❖ Offer training for front office staff.
- ❖ Conduct neighborhood walk-throughs.
- ❖ Post signs welcoming families in multiple languages.

#### **II. *Encouraging Partnerships Among Schools, Families, and Communities***

- Creating opportunities for engaging families and communities
- Sharing awareness of child/adolescent development and transition
- Ensuring pathways to educational excellence

Families, schools, and communities are partners in education. Together they make educational decisions for children; are represented on state, district, and school-level committees regarding academic policies and programs; create and share an understanding of child/adolescent development; and advocate for the success of all children. Schools and community members work collaboratively, connecting students, families and staff to expand learning opportunities and community services. Through shared decision making, advocacy, and community engagement, schools, families, and communities share the responsibility to strengthen schools and positively support student success.

#### **Examples:**

- ❖ Host outreach activities in community, i.e., library, fire hall, community center, etc.
- ❖ Invite local family support services and community organizations to share resources at school events.

- ❖ Consider “asset mapping” to better understand and embrace the strengths, talents, and resources that family and community members bring to support the school.

### **III. *Supporting Student Learning and Student Success***

- Enabling shared decision-making
- Ensuring all families have opportunities to advocate for their own and other children
- Supporting transitions throughout the student’s educational career
- Using data to inform decisions
- Engaging community support

Family, school, and community engagement in education is a key lever for student learning and student success. Schools must be intentional and culturally responsive in their efforts to engage all families. Clearly defined, well-communicated goals and strategies help families and teachers work together to ensure that all students succeed. This includes preparing families as students transition throughout their school age years, to support students' academic, social, emotional, and physical needs. When families are equal partners, there is increased student academic performance, better attendance, and a more successful pathway to college- and career-readiness.

#### **Examples:**

- ❖ Conduct student-led parent/teacher conferences.
- ❖ Analyze school culture and climate data, parent surveys, etc., to target outreach for parents and/or staff.
- ❖ Ensure parents are represented on school decision making teams.

### **IV. *Building Capacity Among School Stakeholders***

- Developing policies and practices that support family engagement
- Providing training and resources to school staff and families to ensure instructional equity

Engaging families as partners in education creates essential relationships that can produce success for students. Ongoing professional development is critical at the state, district, and school levels to provide strategies to assist educators to effectively engage families as well as to build capacity of families to become full partners in education.

#### **Examples:**

- ❖ Develop a parent involvement plan of how the school will engage families to support student success and achievement.
- ❖ Host a book club for staff on a book related to family engagement.
- ❖ Enlist parents and parent organizations to recruit other parents to be involved in their children’s education.
- ❖ Invite parents to school to discuss strategies around engagement.

**V. Promoting Effective School-Family Communication**

- Ensuring targeted outreach
- Encouraging regular and meaningful two-way communication

Clear, on-going, two-way communication is essential for successful school-home partnerships. Schools must take into consideration multiple ways of communication. Communication should be in formats with parent-friendly terminologies and in multiple languages that best meet the needs of all families. When parents and educators communicate effectively, positive relationships develop, problems are more easily solved, and students make greater progress. Building respectful and trusting relationships among school staff, families, and community members is more likely to be effective in creating sustained connections that support student learning.

**Examples:**

- ❖ Make positive phone calls or send emails/texts to parents.
- ❖ Survey parents for the best way to connect and communicate with them.
- ❖ Take 2 – take two minutes to send a personal note to a parent thanking them for their support, input, etc.

## References and Resources:

- [United State Department of Education—Family and Community Engagement](#)
  - <http://www.ed.gov/family-and-community-engagement>
  - [A Parent Checklist](#)
  
- United States Department of Education’s Dual Capacity Building Framework
  - <http://www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/partnership-frameworks.pdf>
  - <http://www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/partners-education.pdf>
  
- [National PTA Standards](#)
  
- [National Network of Partnership Schools \(NNPS\)](#)
  - [Epstein’s Six Types of Family Involvement Framework](#)
  
- [The Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework: Maryland’s Vision for Engaging Families with Young Children](#)
  - [http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child\\_care/docs/MD\\_Fam\\_Engage.pdf](http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/docs/MD_Fam_Engage.pdf)
  
- Maryland ‘s Parent Advisory Council (M-PAC): A Shared Responsibility