



# **Family Engagement Plan**

## Suggested Activities




Family engagement is a distinguishing characteristic of a high-quality school system. An effective family engagement plan creates a foundation for mutual partners to collaborate; embraces the individuality and uniqueness of families; and promotes a child-centered, age appropriate, family-driven culture of learning.

The 86th Texas Legislative Session mandated that each prekindergarten program serving eligible four-year-old students must **develop a family engagement plan, implement it, and make it available on the district, charter, or campus website by November 1 of each school year.**

The purpose of a family engagement plan is to assist the district in achieving and maintaining high levels of family involvement and positive family attitudes toward education.

**Although each district’s family engagement plan will be unique, it must contain six mandated components listed in the Commissioner’s Rule:**

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1. Facilitate family-to-family support
  2. Establish a network of community resources
  3. Increase family participation in decision making
  4. Equip families with tools to enhance and extend learning
  5. Develop staff skills in evidence-based practices that support families in meeting their children’s learning benchmarks
  6. Evaluate family engagement efforts and use evaluations for continuous improvement

The following strategies and suggested activities for effective family engagement activities correspond with the six components.

These activities are intended to help districts reflect and develop their own unique events and practices. While these ideas can serve as inspiration, they are not meant to limit creativity. The possibilities for connecting with families are endless.

**This document was created by the [TEA Early Childhood Education Division](#). For questions regarding family engagement, send an email to [hqpk@tea.texas.gov](mailto:hqpk@tea.texas.gov).**



## Facilitate family-to-family support



### Strategies

- (i) Creating a safe and respectful environment where families can learn from each other as individuals and in groups;
- (ii) Inviting former program participants, including families and community volunteers, to share their education and career experiences with current families;
- (iii) Ensuring opportunities for continuous participation in events designed for families by families such as training on family leadership.



### Suggested Activities

- Host a **“meet and greet”** during the first week of school for families to get to know each other on an informal basis.
- Identify bilingual members of the community who can **translate information for new families** as needed.
- Create a **welcoming, inclusive community space** where families can gather and talk informally with one another before/after the school day.
- Create a **family directory** to encourage families to connect with each other outside of school.
- Promote families’ understanding of different cultures and backgrounds by creating safe spaces for **community dialogue or moderated discussions** to help all families feel comfortable sharing their ideas and experiences.
- Encourage families to set up **mutual support mechanisms** (e.g., phone trees, carpools, babysitting co-ops, play groups).
- Match families with similar interests, goals, or challenges, and provide opportunities for them to have **ongoing connections**.
- Host **events that bring families together**, such as potlucks, sing-alongs, family fun nights, and open houses.
- Organize field trips and other **class activities that include families**.



## Establish a network of community resources



### Strategies

- (i) Building strategic partnerships;
- (ii) Leveraging community resources;
- (iii) Monitoring and evaluating policies and practices to stimulate innovation and create learning pathways;
- (iv) Establishing and maintaining partnerships with businesses, faith-based organizations, and community agencies;
- (v) Identifying support from various agencies, including mental and physical health providers;
- (vi) Partnering with local community-based organizations to create a family-friendly transition plan for students arriving from early childhood settings;
- (vii) Providing and facilitating referrals to family support or educational groups based on family interests and needs;
- (viii) Communicating short- and long-term program goals to all stakeholders;
- (ix) Identifying partners to provide translators and culturally relevant resources reflective of home language.



## Suggested Activities

- Regularly provide families with up-to-date **information on community resources** (e.g., adult schools that offer GED coursework, community health organizations, recreational options, resale shops, social service organizations, etc.)
- Maintain a **community resource handbook** that identifies various support services (e.g., housing, health, legal assistance, domestic violence, etc.)
- Provide families with a list of **free/low-cost recreational options** (e.g., city parks, recreation centers, gyms, outdoor sports fields, etc.) in the community.
- **Translate all information** for families that speak a language other than English at home.
- Assist families in obtaining and using **library cards**.
- Invite a different **community organization** to visit the prekindergarten program each month to share information with families and answer questions about available services.
- Encourage staff to **build relationships with community programs** to enhance the effectiveness of referrals.
- Make active referrals and facilitate personal **connections between families and service providers** (e.g., conference calls with families, connect staff from Texas Home Visiting programs with families at school/community events).
- **Follow up with families after referrals** to find out if services were received and if the families were satisfied.
- **Give staff time to participate** in community events/meetings that enhance the program's ability to meet family needs.



## Increase family participation in decision making



### Strategies

- (i) Developing and supporting a family advisory council;
- (ii) Developing, adopting, and implementing identified goals within the annual campus/school improvement plan targeting family engagement;
- (iii) Developing and supporting leadership skills for family members and providing opportunities for families to advocate for their children/families;
- (iv) Collaborating with families to develop strategies to solve problems and serve as problem solvers;
- (v) Engaging families in shaping program activities and cultivating the expectation that information must flow in both directions to reflect two-way communication;
- (vi) Developing, in collaboration with families, clearly defined goals, outcomes, timelines, and strategies for assessing progress;
- (vii) Providing each family with an opportunity to review and provide input on program practices, policies, communications, and events in order to ensure the program is responsive to the needs of families;
- (viii) Using appropriate tools such as surveys or focus groups to gather family feedback on the family engagement plan.



## Suggested Activities

- Train families **how to advocate** for themselves and their children.
- **Invite legislative representatives** to meet with families to discuss ideas, issues, and problems in their community.
- **Educate families about their rights** under state and federal law and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Create an environment that **affirms parent leadership**.
- Provide opportunities for **families to give input** on key decisions (e.g., family surveys, focus groups, Transition to Kindergarten Plan revisions).
- **Give the advisory council the lead decision-maker role** for specific items each year (e.g., how to celebrate special events at school, field trip destinations, purchases of major items, etc.)
- Ask parents/guardians to **fill out an intake questionnaire about each child** at the beginning of the school year. This information can give teachers a starting point to partner with each family and set mutual goals for the child.
- **Invite families to partner with staff** in reviewing family engagement survey results and making plans for continuous improvement.



## Equip families with tools to enhance and extend learning

### Strategies

- (i) Providing families with updates at least three times per year that specify student progress in health and wellness, language and communication, emergent literacy reading, emergent literacy writing, and mathematics;
- (ii) Designing or implementing existing home educational resources to support learning at home while strengthening the family/school partnership;
- (iii) Providing families with information and/or training on creating a home learning environment connected to formal learning opportunities;
- (iv) Equipping families with resources and skills to support their children through the transition to school and offering opportunities for families and children to visit the school in advance of the prekindergarten school year;
- (v) Providing complementary home learning activities for families to engage in at home with children through information presented in newsletters, online technology, social media, parent/family-teacher conferences, or other school- or center-related events;
- (vi) Providing families with information, best practices, and training related to age-appropriate developmental expectations;
- (vii) Emphasizing benefits of positive family practices such as attachment and nurturing that complement the stages of children's development;
- (viii) Collaborating with families to appropriately respond to children's behavior in a non-punitive, positive, and supportive way;
- (ix) Encouraging families to reflect on family experiences and practices in helping children;
- (x) Assisting families to implement best practices that will help achieve the goals and objectives identified to meet the needs of the child and family.





## Suggested Activities

- **Conference with families** at least three times per school year. Collaborate with them to set goals for their children.
- **Encourage family members to volunteer** in the classroom; use this time to foster enhanced communication regarding their child’s development.
- **Conduct an annual survey** at the beginning of the school year to identify talents, skills, and cultural traditions that families would be willing to share with the classroom.
- **Bring kindergarten staff in** to visit each classroom; invite parents/guardians so they can meet teachers and administrators and ask questions about the transition to kindergarten.
- Implement **Transition to Kindergarten** activities and events to prepare families for what to expect in anticipation of their child beginning Kindergarten
- Create and **share a monthly calendar** of classroom activities so families know what students are doing.
- **Provide a “lending library”** with books, games, art supplies, puzzles, etc. that families can borrow to use at home to support the child’s learning.
- **Provide workshops** for family members about child development topics (e.g., health, child guidance, how the young child learns, etc.)
- Create a **family bulletin board** (online or in the building) to make sure everyone is aware of school and community events; feature a different child development topic each month.
- Encourage families to visit the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) [For Families page](#) to find **child development research and information**.
- **Host “family night” events** centered around shared topics of interest; plan activities for adults and children of varying ages (siblings will want/need to participate too).
- **Use family-friendly apps** (e.g., ReadyRosie, Daily Vroom, etc.) to connect with families, communicate information, and enhance parent/guardian knowledge on child development topics.



## Develop staff skills in evidence-based practices that support families in meeting their children's learning benchmarks

### Strategies

- (i) Providing essential professional development for educators in understanding communication and engagement with families, including training on communicating with families in crisis;
- (ii) Promoting and developing family engagement as a core strategy to improve teaching and learning among all educators and staff;
- (iii) Developing staff skills to support and use culturally diverse, culturally relevant, and culturally responsive family engagement strategies;

### Suggested Activities

- During meetings, **encourage staff to role play** interactions with parents and brainstorm new ideas for enhancing communication with families.
- Identify areas of the classroom where **parents/guardians can play a leading role** in decision making.
- Make space available for staff to **meet privately with family members**.
- Train educators how to respond to **families that are in crisis**.
- Train educators about **community resources that support families'** interests and needs (e.g., safety, housing stability, employment, job skills, financial literacy, health, etc.).
- Provide professional development grounded in a **strengths-based approach to family engagement**.
- Provide professional development focused on **ethics as it relates to family engagement** (e.g., boundaries, confidentiality, etc.)
- Provide professional development that develops **skills in working with families** (e.g., engaging fathers, communication styles, parenting practices, understanding and responding to your child's behavior, etc.)
- Provide professional development that focuses on **differences in parenting styles and perspectives**, including communication styles, role of professionals, caregiving (e.g., sleeping, eating, toileting), discipline, language, and learning.
- Hire staff that **represents** the diversity of the surrounding community.



## Evaluate family engagement efforts and use evaluations for continuous improvement

### Strategies

- (i) Conducting goal-oriented home visits to identify strengths, interests, and needs;
- (ii) Developing data collection systems to monitor family engagement and focusing on engagement of families from specific populations to narrow the achievement gap;
- (iii) Using data to ensure alignment between family engagement activities and district/school teaching and learning goals and to promote continuous family engagement;
- (i) Ensuring an evaluation plan is an initial component that guides action;
- (ii) Using a cyclical process to ensure evaluation results are used for continuous improvement and adjustment;
- (iii) Ensuring teachers play a role in the family engagement evaluation process.

### Suggested Activities

- **Set child-centered goals with parents/guardians** at the beginning of the school year. Check in several times during school year to discuss progress.
- **Survey families at least annually** about the effectiveness of the prekindergarten experience for the child and family.
- Incorporate family engagement goals into the program's **strategic planning initiatives**.
- Use recommended tools to **evaluate the program's effectiveness** and to gather data for continuous improvement goal setting. Recommended tools:

[Head Start Relationship-Based Competencies](#)

[Head Start Program Preparedness Checklist Version 5.0](#) (to improve services for dual language families)

[NAEYC Program Self-Assessment Checklist](#)

[PTA National Standards, Goals, and Indicators for Family-School Partnerships](#)

[Center for the Study of Social Policy Strengthening Families: Self-Assessment for Center Based Early Care and Education Programs](#)