

## Overview: Linking Families to Learning

ISBE has designed a Family Engagement Framework Guide which is a tool for school districts and schools to use in developing and expanding school-family partnerships to support improved student learning and healthy development outcomes. This resource brings together research, promising practices, and a consolidation of key program requirements to provide districts, schools, and families with tools to assist with the planning, implementation, and evaluation of family engagement practices.

At the core of the framework guide are principles that establish a foundation for developing meaningful engagement with families and community leaders including guides that address capacity building, leadership development, resource allocation, progress monitoring, access, and equity.

This guide helps districts, schools and communities with: developing common language for family engagement; improving coordination within systems, communities, districts, and schools; and strengthening capacity to leverage resources and partnerships. While the Illinois State Board of Education is excited to release the Family Engagement Framework Guide, this is only an initial step to improving family and school partnerships across the state of Illinois.

ISBE will need support from external stakeholders to assist in the dissemination of materials and developing a continuous feedback loop so that the field can provide input related to the Framework and professional development needs. ISBE also recognizes that in order to successfully support districts/schools with their efforts, integration of the Framework into existing systems and structures, including the Statewide System of Support, is essential. As additional materials and resources become available, ISBE will post them on their website and ensure that the field is informed.

## Background

In 2009, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) convened a strategic planning meeting to address the agency's parent involvement policy and coordinate parent involvement activities. In 2011, a broader internal committee convened, charged with building on prior work to create a research-based family engagement framework that was linked to the Eight Essential Elements of Continuous School Improvement.

The committee developed a multi-tiered crosswalk that examined the following elements:

- current research
- national models for family engagement, that included the National PTA and USDE framework for school/family partnerships
- federal and state requirements
- state assessment tools including the Five Essentials and Indicator Eight survey
- Rising Star family engagement indicators
- current agency practices, policies, and goals

The Illinois State Board of Education acknowledges that there are a number of quality family engagement frameworks and standards used across the nation. ISBE found strengths in many of these tools but found a need to expand and build upon the work, emphasizing evidence based practices that are **systemic, integrated, and sustainable**.

The synthesis of the research was a significant driver in the development of the family engagement principles. The principles provide the foundation for the required work needed to engage families in meaningful ways. The committee also worked to ensure that the framework connected to existing systems. Research clearly shows that when families, communities, and schools partner to build educational and support systems for children, those systems are stronger and more effective.

## Why a Family Engagement Guide is Important to Schools and Districts

*1) Research review helps districts and schools develop actionable and measurable pathways for family engagement.*

ISBE spent a significant amount of time reviewing, analyzing, and synthesizing research on family engagement, giving more weight to more rigorous studies that demonstrated a statistically positive relationship between the practices and student outcomes. During the review process, it became apparent that there were some overarching themes or principles in which family engagement could be organized. The team determined that the following principles had more significant bodies of evidence: Developing a Family Engagement System, Building a Welcoming and Supportive Environment, Enhancing Communication, and Including Parents in Decision Making. These became the foundation for the Framework.



2) *Clear family engagement standards equip schools and districts with a foundation for effective practice.*

The *Family Engagement Standards of Effective Practice* provides more specific guidance to educators, families and communities as they plan, implement, and evaluate family engagement strategies. Evidence-based practice outlines are organized under each of the four principles. Both, principles and practices, are global in nature and not context specific. While they do not address specific populations or federal or state requirements, they can be adapted and applied across specific contexts. The structure is as follows:

1. Principle

1A Standard (subcomponents of the principle)

1A1 Descriptor (provides even greater specificity to what application might look like)

Although these Standards of Effective Practice are helpful in providing guidance on how to engage families, they do not adequately address what content districts/schools should engage families around. The Integrating Family Engagement Matrix component brings together all of these pieces.

3) *Aligning standards to the continuous school-improvement process equips districts and schools to understand and support meaningful engagement that is linked to learning.*

The *Integrating Family Engagement Matrix* integrates family engagement best practices and legislative requirements with the work that is occurring across all aspects of building effective schools and as part of the continuous improvement process. This document specifically provides guiding questions for districts and schools to consider as they jointly plan, implement, and evaluate family engagement strategies across each of the 8 Essential Elements (Comprehensive Planning, Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, Leadership, Conditions for Learning, Professional Development, and Family and Community).

4) *Legislative review helps schools and districts ensure they meet compliance regulations and better coordinate local, state and federal services and resources.*

There are a number of legislative requirements in place through Title I, Title III, IDEA, and the IL School Code. The *Legislative Requirement References* section expands upon the required family engagement activities outlined in the Integrating Family Engagement Matrix component of the Guide. The legislative requirements are organized by the 8 Essential Elements and the citations for the specific laws and regulations follow each requirement. It is important to note that the requirements highlighted in the Guide are not all inclusive and the actual pieces of legislation should be referenced.

## Ways to Engage

ISBE is asking for the feedback of parents, school and district personnel, community organizations, and other education partners. Please click on the link below to view the framework.

**Please share the Family Engagement Framework Guide with school board members, parent involvement coordinators, school administrators, coaches, families, and community partners to strengthen family engagement and build relationships among critical partners in the education of students.**

For further information on ISBE Family Engagement Framework Guide, log onto to [www.isbe.net/family-engagement](http://www.isbe.net/family-engagement).

If you should have any questions contact Reyna Hernandez, Assistant Superintendent , at [rhernand@isbe.net](mailto:rhernand@isbe.net).

## Quick Links for Family Engagement Resources:

ISBE Website

<http://www.isbe.net/family-engagement>

English Language Learning

<http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/htmls/ellparents.htm>

Early Childhood Education

<http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/default.htm>

Learning Supports

<http://www.isbe.net/learningsupports/html/partnerships.htm>

Special Education and Support Services Division

<http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/parents.htm>

Innovation and Improvement

<http://www.isbe.net/grants/html/parent.htm>



James T. Meeks, Chairman  
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