



# Leveraging Families for Student Success



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**Time Frame** 180-200 session(s)

## Essential Question(s)

- How can our school leverage families to engage as partners in their student's career development process?

## Summary

The College Teams Parent Engagement Perceptions and Opportunities session focuses on examining traditional perceptions of parental involvement. Participants will identify new models for parent engagement that take advantage of opportunities already embedded in school activity frameworks.

## Learning Goals

1. The participant will reflect on their beliefs and the current school systems in place that contribute to the family engagement environment.
2. The participant will identify strategies aligned to family needs that the school can use to increase family engagement.
3. The participant will identify the assets and resources of the families and community that can increase family engagement.
4. The participant will construct one opportunity to engage family/community resources in their support of college and career-going culture that is integrated with existing curricular and extracurricular activities at their school, based on the insight they have gained through objectives 1-3.

## Attachments

- [Activity Design Template.pdf](#)
- [Family friendly school checklist .pdf](#)
- [Increasing Family Engagement Staff Training 6.01pm ppt.pptx](#)
- [Leveraging Families for Student Success.pdf](#)
- [Scenario Planning Doc.pdf](#)

## Materials

- Handouts (Attachments below)
- Pens/Pencils
- Projection is helpful

# Engage

Have participants complete a checklist to identify items/strategies their school is already doing to engage families. Leave room on the list for schools to add items that they are doing but are not listed.

## **Presenter's Note: It's Okay To Say No**

Remind participants as they fill out the checklist that if the answer is "sometimes," then it's a NO.

**Rationale:** This activity will prime participants to think about how they are engaging families at their schools. It is designed to give participants a personal frame of reference to build on for the session materials. Initially, we focus on the positives and establish a baseline so that their responses on the list are useful resources. Additional scaffolding is included in Explore and Explain, which will enable them to understand the purpose of the checklist and generate opportunities for improvement.

## Explore

Based on the total number of participants, invite participants to group themselves into groups of four or five individuals. Hand out two scenarios (found in attachments) per group that describe a family situation on one of the five levels of Maslow's Hierarchy. Pick two that aren't too close to one another on the hierarchy. Everyone in the group reads both. Do not reveal at this time that Maslow's Hierarchy is the framework for discussion. Ask each group to review their scenarios and identify as many family strengths as they can and write them on chart paper.

Share a slide with a summary for each scenario and ask each group to identify one strength for each scenario. Go around to various groups gathering additional (not repetitive) strengths only. When all of the strengths for each scenario have been shared, have each group post their chart paper next to each other so that all strengths for each scenario are in one place. Invite participants to comment on the strengths and add suggestions for consideration.

Preview the research brief and the principles of Maslow's Hierarchy by noting that each scenario represents both different needs and multiple strengths of the families.

**Rationale:** One of the major goals of this session is to gradually shift the participants' thinking from deficit-based perceptions to assets-based perceptions about families, especially those in the two lowest tiers of Maslow's. Many families fall into these levels, and often schools feel that factors like food and shelter insecurity are mostly outside of their control. While this may be true, it's important for the participants not to stop the engagement process by just throwing up their hands because of things beyond their control.

Identifying assets enables participants to see that all families can be involved in their student's development and can be leveraged to meet school goals, just not necessarily in the traditional ways. Guide the conversation in this direction as a segue into the research brief, which comes next.

# Explain

## Presenter's Note: Why-Lighting

Explain the [Why-Lighting](#) strategy, focusing on making notes in the margins.

Have individuals read a short K20 research brief about shifting mindsets and approaches related to family engagement and college career culture. After individuals have read the brief, have the groups engage in a [4-2-1 activity](#) in order to process the reading (save the 1 for Evaluate)

- As individuals read, have them each highlight 4 points that they find interesting and note in the margins any questions, concerns, or comments they have regarding that idea. (10 minutes) focusing on writing notes in the margins.
- Invite participants to share their highlighted ideas and why they highlighted them with an [elbow partner](#). The pair should reach agreement on 2 ideas they feel would be the most useful for their school to use as a way to focus family engagement efforts in the coming semester (20 minutes).

**Rationale:** While we do identify assets in the previous activity, the research brief will help to frame the practical reasons why assets-based thinking can improve family engagement strategies on many levels. Guiding questions within the brief and their discussion with their partner will begin to set participants onto paths for applying this kind of thinking to their specific school situations.

## Extend

Once participants have discussed assets-based thinking is productive, have groups pull their checklists (from Engage) back out and identify one strategy that they would like to discuss.

- Discuss how this strategy engages families with different needs from the levels on Maslow's Hierarchy.
- How does this engagement strategy use the strengths of families from every level? If it doesn't engage all levels, how could it be modified or supplemented with other strategies?
- Groups will then discuss what conclusions can be drawn about their school's beliefs and expectations of families and what families' need based on the family engagement strategies they use most often in their schools.

**Rationale:** Through this activity, we are aggregating all of the pieces of the learning into a single place and discussing what schools already do well. Participants should easily generate ideas about how to improve current efforts. One of the goals of this discussion is shifting thinking from the concept of "doing for" families to "working with." Schools may be doing much for families in lower levels on the Hierarchy, but it is necessary to examine how they are addressing the needs of families at every level.

# Evaluate

Facilitators will share the Oklahoma's Promise completion data for OKCPS feeder high schools and discuss why there's a need to focus on Oklahoma's Promise in the coming school year and the role that families must play in this important endeavor. (Other data may be used in this portion depending on the needs you want to focus on with your audience).

## Presenter's Note: Time

Be sure to plan enough time to let school teams process these data!

As a school teams, groups will design 1 initiative that engages families in a college and career going culture activity that will result in an increase in the number of 8th graders enrolled in Oklahoma's Promise. They should review their checklist from Engage and the research brief (Explain) as a way to focus on a design that is integrated into their schools' systems and that leverages families' strengths at all levels of Maslow's hierarchy.

Before they jump into designing, discuss the planning template and each subsequent stage. Direct their attention to what happens in the "design" phase and "development" phase.

Use a metaphor like planning to decorate a cake where in planning you are still vague on details. What are we making and why? The design stage will be sketches of how it might look. In development, we begin gathering materials and putting the pieces together (may have to revise design based on availability and how things are coming together). Implementation will be putting it all together into a final piece.

Assessment is determining whether the product is satisfactory.

## Presenter's Note: Focus

Review the activity planning process with the slide, including what type of guiding questions teams should ask at each time. Try to get teams to focus on *one* plan, but planning it in detail, as opposed to listing lots of ideas they "could" do.

Each team will then share their decided on activity with the whole session. Facilitator should use a strategy for groups to share their plans. It could either be a gallery walk with an outline for \*1\* plan or it could be a shared Google Doc.

Have each team reflect on what they heard from other groups and whether they have ideas about how to improve their activity based on others' presentations.

**Rationale:** We hope to see through the presentation of their activity design an application of their learning about integrated and assets-based approaches to family engagement.

# Follow-up Activities



## Research Rationale

Making family involvement a central component of the school community positively affects students' success in school and their career aspirations (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Social Cognitive Career Theory indicates that individual achievement aspirations are influenced by both social and cognitive factors. A student's beliefs about their abilities to attain a particular career and their interest level in a career pathway are highly influenced by their social relationships, especially within their family and during early adolescence (Turner & Lapan, 2002). For example, students measure the appropriateness of their career choices against how they think their families will value that career path, and they judge their own potential competency at a vocation based on their family's support. They are also inclined to hold value for and self-efficacy toward certain occupations when those occupations align with themes that are supported by their family and community (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004). In light of these findings, including families in school processes for developing students' academic and career pathways is a critical part of student success (Turner & Lapan, 2002). However, schools are often not confident in how to better involve families, and likewise, families are not always sure of how to best support their children as students and future professionals. This is often a result of tensions in the structures, systems, and norms between homes and institutions of education (Mapp & Kutner, 2013).

## Resources

- Epstein, J. L., & Salinas, K. C. (2004). Partnering with families and communities. *Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 12–18.
- Mapp, K. L., & Kutner, P. J. (2013). *Partners in education: A dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships* (Publication). SEDL.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4): 370–96.
- Turner, S., & Lapan, R. T. (2002). Career self-efficacy and perceptions of parent support in adolescent career development. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 51(1), 44-55. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.2002.tb00591.x