Family and Community Engagement Self-Reflection Tool

A Utah State Board of Education Technical Assistance Document

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Introduction

What is the Family and Community Engagement Self-Reflection Tool?

This tool was developed by the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) as an additional resource informed by the collaborative Partnerships for Middle School Success (PMSS) project and evidence-based research indicating the components of high-quality family and community engagement. The USBE has developed the tool as a support for all local education agencies (LEAs) seeking to evaluate and improve their efforts relating to family and community engagement strategies, programs, and policies to meet the unique needs of their communities. As defined in the [Essential Playbook for Family Engagement in Middle School by West Ed](#), a tool developed by West Ed informed by the PMSS project, family engagement is broadly defined as a shared responsibility among families, schools, and communities to actively support children's learning. This tool can be used with West Ed's playbook or as a standalone exercise for LEAs.

When LEAs provide meaningful opportunities for families to engage in support of their students' education, a correlation with higher school attendance, academic achievement, teacher job satisfaction, and lower rates of student disciplinary action has been found. While LEAs have legal obligations with family engagement in scenarios involving Title I, Title III, and special education funding, involvement of families in the education process is for all families and is beneficial to all members of the school community. Those leading schools and/or family engagement efforts will be able to utilize this tool to reflect on their current practices as part of their school improvement efforts.

Who the Tool is For

This tool utilizes the language of team leader. Team leaders can be family engagement specialists, family liaisons, principals, assistant principals, executive directors, district leaders, or other formal positions of leadership if a family engagement specialist position does not currently exist at the LEA. Informal leaders include teaching leaders, community leaders, and family leaders of students enrolled at the LEA. By creating a team with multiple stakeholders, different perspectives can be shared during the reflection process of utilizing this tool.

How to Use the Tool

The tool should be completed as a team with individuals who can offer multiple perspectives across various departments or roles to ensure that a comprehensive understanding of family and community engagement has been gathered. Completion of the rubric may take between 60 – 120 minutes (about 2 hours), depending on the group's needs, leading to more in-depth conversations.

LEAs should use this tool to assess current practices or supports and their accessibility and relevance to families.   This tool is for internal assessment and reflection to improve practices and is not tied to reporting requirements. An honest inventory of strengths and opportunities for growth will help LEAs make the best use of this tool.

After completing all the indicators, identify what areas to focus on first and work with your team to create a plan for improvement using the guiding questions at the end of this document.

Scoring Your Family and Community Engagement Practices

Indicators of Family and Community Engagement

The tool utilizes indicators of family and community engagement best practices to assist LEAs in their strategic planning and improvement plans through self-reflection. It emphasizes leveraging community partnerships, providing information in an accessible format, sharing ownership in the decision-making process, and using a multi-tiered approach to family and community engagement.

- Capacity Building: An exploration of how the LEA supports all members of the community to be successful in establishing a home-school partnership.
- Process: LEA goals and strategies are informed by data and input from all stakeholders.

- Infrastructure: The LEA allocates resources and develops programs, strategies, and operations with family and community engagement as a clear priority.
- Outcomes: Practices and strategies are implemented to align with LEA projects or programs, aiming to achieve a unified objective and ensure long-term sustainability.

Indicator Levels

Not Evident

At this level, the LEA has not implemented any practices or strategies for family and community engagement. There is no support, resources, or clear expectations. The culture does not prioritize engaging families. Efforts are nonexistent.

Emerging

At the emergent level, the LEA is engaging in initial efforts towards high-quality family and community engagement. The LEA has started to recognize the importance of family and community engagement and is beginning to implement some practices. There may be some support and resources available, but they are not consistently accessible to all members of the school community. Expectations are starting to be defined, and there is a growing awareness of the need to create a welcoming culture. Efforts are occasionally made, but might not be fully incorporated into the LEA's comprehensive strategy.

Approaching

At the developing level, the LEA has made significant progress in implementing family and community engagement practices. Support and resources are more consistently accessible, and clear expectations are established. The culture is becoming more welcoming and invested in engaging all families. There is a structured approach to capacity building, and efforts are more intentional and aligned with the LEA's goals. Family engagement strategies are integrated into the LEA's overall plan, and there is ongoing professional learning to support these efforts.

Effective

At an exemplary level, the LEA has fully embraced family and community engagement as a core component of its mission. This is reflected by having family and community engagement fully integrated into the day-to-day operation of an LEA with attention to the sustainability of programs and strategies. Support and resources are readily accessible to all members of the school community, and expectations are explicitly stated and consistently met. The culture is welcoming and fully invested in engaging all families, and high-quality practices are implemented above minimum standards. Capacity-building structures are well-established, ensuring that resources are properly allocated and that all school community members are supported to meet engagement goals. The LEA demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement and sustainability in its family engagement efforts.

Capacity Building

Best practices for family and community engagement indicate having support and resources made accessible by LEA leadership. This includes explicitly stated and clear expectations, and a culture that is welcoming and fully invested in engaging all families as necessary for the success of the LEA's students. The implementation of high-quality family engagement practices requires that LEAs commit to the above minimum practices and standards. To establish the components, an LEA must build capacity structures to allocate resources effectively and support all school community members in meeting family and community engagement expectations.

Capacity Building Levels

Level 1, Emerging: The LEA provides basic support and resources for family engagement, including clear expectations and a welcoming culture.

Level 2, Approaching: Includes Level 1 and adds structured training and professional development for staff and families to support engagement.

Level 3, Effective: Includes Level 1 and 2 and adds ongoing evaluation and refinement of capacity-building strategies based on feedback and outcomes.

Look for:

Not Evident	Emerging	Approaching	Effective
No observable practices are in place.	Professional learning to support family and community engagement may be offered during onboarding or throughout the year to comply with policies or grants, but it is not consistent.

LEA leadership meets to identify the previous academic term's trends in data and decides on what professional learning is needed, the most effective way to engage in professional learning, and what supports will need to be implemented to facilitate full participation by community members.

Staff are expected to implement family engagement strategies, such as home visits, personalized communications via phone calls, text messages, or school communication platforms. | All members of the school community, including paraeducators, families, and community partners, receive ongoing professional learning opportunities to meet engagement expectations in addition to an orientation to the LEA at the start of the year or shortly after enrollment or onboarding via LEA staff or a family mentor.

Surveys from staff, family, and community guide LEA leadership on needed professional learning, effective engagement methods, and what supports need to be implemented to facilitate full participation by community members.

Time is built into LEA staff schedules at least monthly to prioritize family engagement strategies (e.g., home visits, personalized messages, phone calls, or text messages home), and ongoing professional learning specific | The LEA utilizes or supports the creation of family and community networks to support LEA goals and bridge gaps in resources.

The LEA includes community partners in collaborative meetings and professional learning opportunities for strategic alignment and resource allocation.

The LEA has a designated Family and Community Engagement Specialist or Liaison whose professional focus is to oversee all family and community engagement goals, strategies, training, and projects.

Resources are available to families in their home language and an alternative visual/auditory method (e.g., video or audio message) to develop their skills to support at-home learning and be |

Not Evident	Emerging	Approaching	Effective
	Some members of the school community receive ongoing professional learning opportunities to meet engagement expectations.	to family and community engagement strategies.	full participants in family engagement.

Process

Process involves the way in which LEAs identify and shape the family and community engagement strategies that will best meet their needs and those of their school community. While strategies can be considered as broad, research-based practices, LEAs are always open to personalizing their approach for their demographic, so long as the strategy at its core functions aligns with its intention to achieve evidence-based outcomes.

Process Building Levels

Level 1, Emerging: The LEA identifies engagement strategies aligned with research-based practices and community needs.

Level 2, Approaching: Includes Level 1 and adds stakeholder collaboration in strategy development and regular review of engagement processes.

Level 3, Effective: Includes Level 1 and 2 and adds data-driven decision-making and continuous improvement cycles for engagement strategies.

Look for:

Not Evident	Emerging	Approaching	Effective
No observable practices are in place.	Information intended for the public is disseminated through the school's website in multiple languages and audio formats to meet the diverse needs of families. Family and community engagement policies and goals are developed with input from families and the broader school community. The LEA supports the facilitation of a family and community engagement team that informs LEA goals, strategy, and policy.	The LEA incorporates the use of a home visit model or strategy based on an evidence-based framework like the Parent Teacher Home Visit (PTHV) model. The LEA utilizes an early warning system to track students at risk for chronic absenteeism. The LEA conducts a needs assessment before each academic year starts that incorporates family, student, community, and staff input. Messages to families or community members include positive phone calls and personalized communication. The LEA has a communication template for guiding questions to facilitate communication between staff and families.	The LEA embeds family and community engagement strategies in its multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) model. The LEA utilizes a data tracking and communication system to support communication between departments pre- and post-home visits. The LEA conducts a resource allocation review and community asset mapping (review or full development) process to identify needs and plan strategic next steps for the following school year. The LEA has a policy promoting communication with families that follows a five-to-one positive-to-negative communication ratio, fostering a culture of catching and celebrating the good.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure addresses the allocation of resources and the way in which policy, the school day, the LEA calendar year, staffing, and budget are structured to support meaningful, intentional, and high-quality family and community engagement practices.

Infrastructure Building Levels

Level 1, Emerging: The LEA allocates basic resources and structures policies to support family and community engagement.

Level 2, Approaching: Includes Level 1 and adds dedicated staff roles, budget allocations, and scheduling considerations for engagement.

Level 3, Effective: Includes Level 1 and 2 and adds integration of engagement priorities into all operational and strategic planning.

Look for:

Not Evident	Emerging	Approaching	Effective
No observable practices are in place.	The LEA has selected family and community engagement as a goal or priority, but discussions on how to meet that goal do not happen. Follow-up or continuation of conversations with or about families is isolated to a singular group or event. Ownership of family engagement is placed solely on families to reach out or find resources via LEA platforms. A commitment to family and community engagement is evident in the LEAs mission and vision statements. Duties related to family and community engagement are placed on an individual or small group in addition to regular professional duties.	Communication to build family skills is tailored around calendar themes or assessment periods. Home visits might occur at a Tier 3 level in response to a student's behavior or academics. The LEA utilizes existing compliance measures such as the Special Education Indicator 8, the Family Involvement survey, or the Individualized Education Program meeting to facilitate and/or gather information regarding family and community engagement. The LEA utilizes braiding funding and intentional partnership structures that will promote the sustainability of family and community engagement strategies and programs. The LEA posts family engagement policies that use clear, generalizable language in multiple languages and	A handbook is provided to all members of the school community that outlines the roles and responsibilities of each member with explicitly defined expectations. At registration, families are asked to identify what their preferred method of receiving communication is. Meeting times, resources, and support are provided to ensure staff and families can work together. Families are empowered to support, lead, or inform LEA programs, strategies, and policies by leveraging volunteer opportunities and subsidizing participation as appropriate.

Not Evident	Emerging	Approaching	Effective
	There are visual representations of all families with students enrolled at your LEA.	via audio that is easy to find on the LEA webpage.	

Outcomes

Outcomes involve the progress of monitoring of the family and community engagement strategies towards LEA goals. This can involve the assessment of existing data collection points such as family surveys, student surveys, the Indicator 8 Parent Involvement survey, attendance trends, or other early warning systems. LEAs can also utilize anecdotal data via street data collection methods such as informal check-ins or community pulse checks to gather feedback from families, in addition to family councils and family engagement teams.

Outcomes Building Levels

Level 1, Emerging: The LEA monitors engagement outcomes using basic data sources such as surveys and attendance trends.

Level 2, Approaching: Includes Level 1 and adds use of qualitative data and stakeholder feedback to assess engagement effectiveness.

Level 3, Effective: Includes Level 1 and 2 and adds alignment of engagement outcomes with LEA goals and long-term sustainability planning.

Look for:

Not Evident	Emerging	Approaching	Effective
No observable practices are in place.	The LEA coordinates in-person events and invites community partners with a shared need or mission. Updates are shared with all school and community members in an accessible manner through the family's preferred language, mode of communication, and free from academic jargon. The LEA is evidenced to use high levels of inclusion as evidenced by school climate surveys and the USBE's Portrait of Meaningful Inclusion for Students with Disabilities.	The LEA coordinates in-person events to include end-of-event data collection methods, including pulse checks and exit tickets, to assess event effectiveness and progress towards broad LEA goals or objectives. The LEA utilizes student attendance or other compulsory existing data collection strategies to inform and monitor progress towards goals and objectives. Families receive ongoing communication about their student(s) beyond academic or behavioral needs. Information provided at in-person events is available and accessible for all families through the LEAs website, newsletters, social media, etc. Information is available in multiple languages through the use of translation devices or interpreters provided for families as needed, with families reporting a higher level of	The LEA prioritizes family and community voice through family and community groups, including focus groups. The LEA utilizes student attendance or other compulsory existing data collection strategies to inform and monitor progress towards goals and objectives. Communication between the LEA, families, and the community is reported as feeling comfortable and responded to within a reasonable period. The LEA works to align in-person events with the events of community partners to maximize the use of resources and avoid competition for/time and day. The LEA may even work in partnership with community

Not Evident	Emerging	Approaching	Effective
		confidence in the targeted skill upon completion of the event.	organizations to host shared events.

Reflecting on Findings

Utilize the following questions to reflect and guide the development of your action plan to improve your family and community engagement practices. Consider what actions your LEA can take to advance to the next step.

Current Practices

- What are the key strengths and areas for improvement identified in our family and community engagement practices?
- How do our current engagement strategies align with the needs and preferences of our families and community members?
- What feedback have we received from families and community members regarding our engagement efforts?
- Are there any gaps in our engagement practices that need to be addressed to better support our students and families?

Aligning with LEA Goals

- How can we integrate the findings from the self-reflection tool into our LEAs strategic planning and improvement goals?
- What specific actions can we take to enhance our family and community engagement based on the identified strengths and areas for improvement?
- How can we ensure that our engagement strategies are sustainable and continuously improved over time?
- What resources and support do we need from LEA leadership to effectively implement the recommended improvements?

School Improvement

- How can we align our family and community engagement efforts with our broader school improvement initiatives?
- What role can school leaders and family engagement specialists play in driving these improvements?
- How can we measure the impact of our engagement strategies on student outcomes and overall school performance?
- What partnerships can we leverage to support our engagement and school improvement goals?

If you would like more information or training to build your family and community engagement practices or policies, contact the USBE via the [Training Request Portal](#).