Building School Capacity: Engaging families in K–12 Education

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College Board Conference
Price Room, Fifth Floor
Building School Capacity: Engaging families and students in K–12 Education

Morning Agenda

- Unit 1: Greetings and Introductions based on Interest for Session
- Unit 2: What Leaders Should Know and Do to Improve Capacity Building Efforts in Engagement
- Unit 3: Acquisition Teamwork – Roles, Responsibilities, & More
- Unit 4: Activity to Assess School/Organization Culture for Readiness To Apply Practices To Sustain Authentic Engagement
Premise

The work of educating students requires the engagement of educators, administrators, families and communities. Sustained student learning and school improvement require capacity building at homes, schools and the community.

Boston Public Schools used the Office of Family and Student engagement to drive capacity building with schools, families and community at all levels for student success and partnership improvement efforts in K–12 education.
Historical Challenges and Opportunities

- Paradigm shift within the local, state, national and internationally context.

- Engaging educators, administrators, families and communities for student learning and school improvement.

- They will develop strategies to engage families/parents through capacity opportunities with K–12 education and college/career support assistance.
Roles-Collaboration-Partners

- How do we move our work from seeing parents as recipients of services to being collaborative partners with our schools?

- As a cultural broker of effectively engaging families in their children’s education and in the improvement of schools, what are the various roles families can play?
A Shift in Focus

MOVING FROM

• Full responsibility of provide Family and Student Engagement
• Focus generally on activities and the number of families attended
• Providing advocacy for parents
• Communicating as lone ranger with parents for teachers and school staff
• Non-related and isolated events that do not connect with families for self-efficacy and student learning

SYSTEMIC FOCUS

• Shared responsibility and accountability of engagement through school action team/plan.
• Co-construct with the principals, families, teachers and students to plan and implement Early Learning, K-12 and college/career hopes and dreams readiness.
• Coaching to building capacity of schools and families to authentically connect and engage as partners
• Create systems with school-based and central evaluation protocol to capture engagement work for replication.
BUILDING CAPACITY OF DISTRICT
Capacity Building

- Prepare and connect “all” to the mission of schools – to support schools and families in helping all students reach higher levels of student achievement.
- Establish a culture that values and respects development and engagement actions for school improvement and school network efforts.
- Set benchmarks and evaluate school data to drive the engagement to build the capacity of schools and families.
Paradigm Shift

People have wondered...

“What is engagement and what can it look like at school levels?

The new question is...

“How are students performing differently because of what adults do to build the capacity of schools and families?”
Acquisition Teamwork For Capacity

Trust
Effective communication
A positive “can-do” attitude
Motivation to perform and improve
We mentality
Ownership of work
Respect for everyone
Keeping focused on customer partner goals
Where do we start with *capacity*?

- **Connections** – social capital, the internal and external relationships and the strength and structure of those connections
- **Capabilities** – the specific types of human capital, skills knowledge and know-how
- **Confidence** – the types of individual self-efficacy
- **Cognition** – beliefs, assumptions and worldviews

Higgins (2005)
BUILDING CAPACITY OF SCHOOLS
1) Which of the numerous challenges discussed or exist in your schools/organizations, are most important core values regarding engaging families? (Pick 3 or more)

2) On a scale of 1 = Low to 10 = High, how would you rate your school/organization’s willingness to build capacity for engaging families?

3) Considering ways to improve performance results of students, what are most important priorities to improve your organization/school’s capacity to do things differently together?
The Role of Capacity Building Leader

- To serve as project plan lead, coordinating plan development, identifying areas for training, challenges to be addressed and managing data collection
- Working with Engagement Facilitators to identify and promote best practice
- Identify schools in need of technical assistance for implementing best practice
- Coordinating professional development based on HUB needs and focus
- This is a stipend position requiring one-day per week outside of their buildings
School Commitment Paradigm Shift

• FROM

  Not only recruitment outreach and counting numbers of participants attending delivered sessions.

• TO

  Focusing on deliberate planning and monitoring of family learning and engagement opportunities for student learning and measuring the impact of school, staff, and family learned behavior and self-efficacy.
**Expanded School Commitments**

- Principals and engagement team not only articulate a vision of excellence with family, student, and community engagement, but hold everyone accountable to ensuring school success.

- School and families stays close to the real action of school-wide engagement. Mutual respect, trust, and leading by example run deep in successful school-home connection culture.

- School community embodies a sense of collegiality and commitment to school-wide engagement through professional development and other learning offerings (i.e. parent university, FCOC principal PD, and other trainings).

- Data from many sources are used diligently to adapt teaching and learning to support every student.

- Families and educators work together in partnership.
BUILDING CAPACITY OF FAMILIES
Capacity: Create experiences that will support families to guide student learning and school improvement

- **Early Childhood:**
  - Home Visits
  - Lending Libraries
  - Discussion Groups
  - Workshops on how to stimulate their children’s mental, physical and emotional development.

- **Elementary/Middle School:**
  - Interactive homework involving both parents/children.
  - Workshops on topics parents suggest.
  - Regular calls from teachers (not just when there are problems). Remember to always lead with something positive.
  - Learning packets in reading, science, math, as well as training on how to use them.
  - Regular meetings with teachers to talk about their child’s progress and what they are learning.
Recommendation #1: Create experiences that will support families to guide student learning and school improvement.

High School:

- Regular meetings with teachers and counselors to plan their children’s academic programs
- Information about program options, graduation requirements, test schedules and post secondary education options and how to plan for them.
- Explanations of courses students should take to be prepared for college or other postsecondary education.
- Information about financing postsecondary education and applying for financial aid.

At all levels:

- Work with families to support children in making transitions.
College/Career Aspirations Capacity

• High School:
  • Co-constructing meetings with teachers and counselors to plan their children’s academic
  • Participation in program options, graduation requirements, test schedules and post secondary education options and how to plan for them.
  • Co-facilitating explanations of courses students should take to be prepared for college or other postsecondary education.
  • Co-partners in searching financing postsecondary education and applying for financial aid.

• At all levels:
  • Learning about transitions.
Recommendation #2: Link family and community engagement efforts to student learning.

- Develop or adopt programs to engage parents in working with their children to develop specific skills.
  - Help parents assess child’s progress and steer child to next steps
- Works with local after school programs and extracurricular to link their content in classroom
- Link school’s traditional staples of parent engagement (open house, etc.) to learning
  - Incorporate information on standards and exhibits of student work at open houses and back-to-school nights.
  - Engage parents and students in math/reading games at Family Nights.
  - Use school newsletter to discuss test results and how students are doing to meet higher standards.
BUILDING CAPACITY OF STUDENTS
Engagement Practices

• Student-led conferences
• Curriculum guides related to standards
• Reading projects-tutor training, reading nights, reading intervention programs
• Writing projects-family portfolio nights, writing workshops, evenings with authors
• School Programs-Destination Middle School, parent’s primer, transition camps
• Arts & Humanities projects-renaissance fairs, school-wide productions, art in schools
• Science projects-outdoor classrooms, curriculum audits, assistance for teachers, science fairs
BUILDING CAPACITY OF COMMUNITY
Management System

- Memorandum of Agreements
- Engagement Action Advisory Councils
- Working Groups
- Use of Data
  1) Building Capacity of School and Families
  2) Monitoring Student Progress
  2) Closing Family, Student and Community Engagement Gap
- Action Plans
  1) Engagement Action Teams and Parent Portal Leads
  2) School-based Individual Work Plans and Family Engagement Plan
- Calendars, Mid-Year Assessments, and Evaluation Performance Measures
Implications

- Legitimizing Value Add
- Shared Goals that are School-level Personalized
- Desired Outcomes of Impact
- Process, Content, and Product Results
- Evidence of Shift with Performance Measures
- Making Difference From All Stakeholders
  1) Behavior
  2) Attitude
  3) Engagement
  4) Self-Efficacy
  5) Student Achievement