

## Professional Development Activity on Parent and Guardian Engagement

This professional development activity will help team members assess the six different ways that the school can involve parents and guardians based on the work of Joyce L. Epstein, director of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships and the National Network of Partnership Schools, and colleagues (2002): (1) parenting, (2) communicating, (3) volunteering, (4) learning at home, (5) decision making, and (6) collaborating with community. The activity builds on the rationale that effective teams involve parents and guardians through a variety of practices.

### Time Frame

The team should allow thirty to forty-five minutes for this activity.

### Materials

This activity requires a copy of the school assessment of parent and guardian involvement practices and a pen or pencil for each participant.

### Process

One team member should volunteer as facilitator. The facilitator should hand out the assessment to each member and then lead the following three steps.

1. Have each team member complete the school assessment of parent and guardian involvement practices, selecting only one rating for each item. Explain that if someone *does not* know if the school offers an item, he or she can write *do not know* in the Comments column for further discussion.
2. Once team members have completed their assessment, guide discussion on each of the six sections. Team members should note areas of strength and target growth potential, and discuss *don't know* topics.
3. Lead discussion about a growth area implementation plan, and facilitate team members' agreement to moving forward with their next steps.

### Results

Participation in this activity helps the team view parent and guardian engagement through a broader lens. This work will inform and prioritize content for the school counselor–administrator team's parent and guardian engagement plan and communication plan.

**School Assessment of Parent and Guardian Involvement Practices**

**Parenting:** Help all families establish home environments to support children as students by providing the following.

My school offers this:	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Comments
Information on parenting and child development				
Parent education or training (general equivalency degree, family literacy, English as a new language, college programs, or career and technical education training programs)				
Family learning nights to help families work with their child (on subjects such as mathematics)				
Family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition, and community resources				
Home visits or neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families				

**Communicating:** Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and students' progress, such as the following.

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Comments
Conferences with every parent and guardian at least once a year with follow-ups as needed				
Language translators to assist families as needed				
Opportunities to share student work with parents and guardians weekly or monthly for review and comments				
Consistent communication with parents and guardians				
Regular school-home communication				
Clear information on all school policies, programs, and assessments				

Informal conversations with parents and guardians				
An inviting climate for parent and guardian participation				
School technology to share information (a website or a school management system)				
Social media to connect and communicate with parents and guardians				
<b>Volunteering:</b> Recruit and organize parent and guardian help and support by providing the following.				
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Comments</b>
An annual survey to identify volunteers' interests, talents, and availability				
A family room or center for volunteer work, meetings, and resources				

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A system for parents and guardians to connect with one another				
<b>Learning at home:</b> Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and plans by providing the following.				
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Information for families on required content and performance standards, ways to help students improve required skills, and standardized testing				
Regular homework assignments that require students to demonstrate and discuss with parents and guardians what they are learning in class				
Summer learning packets or activities				
Opportunities for family participation in helping students set academic goals each year and plan for postsecondary education				

**Decision making:** Include parents and guardians in school decisions, and develop parent and guardian leaders or a parent and guardian liaison by having the following.

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Comments
Active parent and guardian organization or participation in school committees				
Information shared for school and local elections				
Voter registration during registration pick-ups or back-to-school nights				
Support for parent-community advocacy groups that lobby for school reform and improvements				

**Collaborating with community:** Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development by providing the following.

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Comments
Information on community-based activities that link to learning skills and talents (such as summer classes at YMCA)				
A central store for family services (access to school information, healthcare providers, and mental health services) through partnerships with school and community service organizations				
Service to the community by students, families, and schools				
School-community partnerships (such as community recycling campaigns)				
A student mentoring program with community members				

*Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2002). School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.*