EAB

Parent Involvement and Engagement at Rural Secondary Schools

District Leadership Forum

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1) Executive Overview

Key Observations

Build parent-school partnerships to improve student success at the secondary level. Successful partnerships between schools and parents of secondary students improve student success.[1] When students transition from elementary to secondary school, multiple obstacles—more pronounced in rural, high-poverty districts—impede parent-school partnerships. To combat these challenges, school staff should provide curriculum information to encourage parents to engage with their student's academics, organize workshops about post-secondary options to develop parents' high educational aspirations for their students, and develop flexible parent programming to support the needs of different groups of parents.

Use regular communication and parent-focused academic assignments to engage parents with secondary students' academics. At the secondary level, parents may be unfamiliar with their student's coursework. In addition, students become less willing to share information about their lives at school.[2] In response, school staff should clearly and consistently explain deadlines, course objectives, and student progress to parents through multiple channels (e.g., phone calls, in-person meetings, posts online). These actions improve parents' ability to understand their student's school lives—if parents are aware of deadlines, they can help their student complete schoolwork on-time and effectively. Moreover, educators can use parent-student-school contracts and targeted assignments (e.g., student-relative interviews) to further engage parents in their student's academic performance.

Combat parents' misconceptions about post-secondary options through a series of workshops to promote high educational aspirations. Research shows that when parents express high educational aspirations for students, student success indicators (e.g., high school graduation rates) improve.[3] However, minority and low-income parents often overestimate the cost and underestimate the feasibility of postsecondary education. To combat this obstacle, school administrators should consider implementing a parent education series through which administrators discuss post-secondary applications, financial aid, and other topics.

Assess parents' needs and provide resources accordingly to reach traditionally disengaged parents. Research suggests that all parents, regardless of race and class background, care about their student's education, and administrators should not assume any parents are disinterested.[4] Rather, schools should assess parents' needs and the obstacles they face and target parent programming accordingly to improve parent engagement. This approach elevates parents as partners in student success and frames the school as welcoming and helpful. Moreover, to respond to parent obstacles such as work schedules, school staff should be flexible in their delivery of parent programming (e.g., home visits).

Leverage research-backed programs to engage parents at the secondary level. The National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University offers guidance for schools interested in improving parent involvement (i.e., parent participation in administrator-defined activities). To improve parent engagement (i.e., parent commitment to initiatives that elevate parents as partners in student success), administrators should consider the research-backed, nine-week parent engagement program from the Parent Institute for Quality Education.

1) "Family Engagement," *National Dropout Prevention Center*, https://dropoutprevention.org/effective-strategies/family-engagement/. Accessed October 14, 2019.
2) "Tips for Communicating with Your Teen," *Child Mind Institute*, https://childmind.org/article/tips-communicating-with-teen/. October 17, 2019.
3) Fan, Xitao and Chen, Michael, "Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis," *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(1), 2001. http://pages.erau.edu/~andrewsa/Project_2/Christian_John/DuneProject/Child%20Success.pdf. Accessed October 14, 2019.
4) Ishimaru and Lott, "Charting a Course to Equitable Collaboration: Learning from Parent Engagement Initiatives in the Road Map Project," University of Washington, 2014. https://education.uw.edu/sites/default/files/research/projects/epsc/EquitableCollaborationReport_0.pdf. Accessed October 17, 2019.

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2) Parent-School Partnerships at Secondary Schools

Benefits and Obstacles

Parent-School Partnerships Yield Significant Benefits for Secondary Students, But Become Less Common After Elementary School

In a parent-school partnership, students' caregivers participate formally and informally in activities intended to impact student achievement and success in school.[5] Meaningful, trusting partnerships between parents and their student's school consistently emerge as top factors in student success, including higher grade point averages and test scores and improved behavior in the classroom. These partnerships continue to play a vital role at the secondary level: Successful partnerships between schools and parents of secondary students help students graduate from high school and can improve the chances that students enroll in post-secondary education. [6]

Despite these documented benefits, many schools experience a decline in parent-school partnerships as students transition from elementary to secondary school, when specific obstacles to parent-school partnerships emerge. These obstacles may be especially pronounced for rural, high-poverty districts with a significant percentage of non-parent guardians. [7]

Selected Obstacles to Parent-School Partnerships at the Secondary Level

Obstacle	*Solution*
Low Parent Self-Efficacy As students reach secondary school, their **schoolwork becomes more challenging** and they become more independent. As a result, parents may feel that they are unable or unlikely to meaningfully impact their student's academic behavior.[8]	**Facilitate Academic Involvement** School staff provide **information and resources** to make secondary-level academic content more accessible for parents (**page 4**).
Misconceptions about Post-Secondary Accessibility Research shows that high educational aspirations are an important way for parents to engage with secondary-level students. However, low-income and minority parents often overestimate the cost and **underestimate the feasibility of their student's enrollment** in post-secondary education.[9]	**Host A Parent University** School staff facilitate **comprehensive parent engagement modules** designed to acculturate parents to the postsecondary system (**pages 5-6**).

5) Parent, Family, Community Involvement In Education, *National Education Association*, http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB11_ParentInvolvement08.pdf. Accessed October 16, 2019
6) Larry Ferlazzo, "Involvement or Engagement?" *Educational Leadership* vol. 68, no. 8 (May 2011) Pages 10-14; "Family Engagement," *National Dropout Prevention Center*, https://dropoutprevention.org/effective-strategies/family-engagement/. Accessed October 14, 2019.
7) Wolpert-Gawron, Heather, "8 Ways to Encourage Family Engagement in Secondary Schools," *Edutopia*, May 17, 2016. https://www.edutopia.org/blog/8-ways-encourage-family-engagement-secondary-schools-heather-wolpert-gawron. Accessed October 14, 2019; "Semke, Carrie A. and Susan M. Sheridan, "Family-School Connections in Rural Education Settings: A Systematic Review of the Empirical Literature," *School Community Journal,* 22(1), 2012. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ974684.pdf. Accessed October 14, 2019.
8) Jensen, Krista and Minke, Kathleen, "Engaging Families at the Secondary Level: An Underused Resource for Student Success," *School Community Journal*, 27(20), 2017, http://www.adi.org/journal/2017fw/JensenMinkeFall2017.pdf. Accessed October 15, 2019.
9) "Closing the College Access Gap," *EAB*, 2017.

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Physical and Logistical Barriers

Though research shows that parents from all backgrounds care about their student's education, distance and poverty can **prevent parents from attending involvement/engagement opportunities** at rural secondary schools.[10]

Incorporate Flexibility and Respond to Families' Needs

School staff find creative ways to offer involvement/engagement opportunities, such as **altering the hours and location of programming**. School staff design programming around parents' needs to improve its impact and elevate parents as true partners in student success (**pages 7-8**).

Parent Involvement Necessary But Not Sufficient for Optimal Parent-School Partnerships

Recent research about parent-school partnerships suggests that—though parental involvement is important—administrators should rely not only on parent involvement, but also develop initiatives that promote parent engagement.[11] In parent involvement efforts, administrators provide structured opportunities (e.g., presentations) for parents without sourcing parental input. In parental engagement initiatives, administrators listen to the needs of and work together with parents to cultivate partnerships that support student success.[12]

District administrators often strive to implement both involvement and engagement strategies.[13] Administrators should recognize that parental engagement initiatives require deep investment in relationship building to move beyond basic involvement and promote true parent-school partnerships (e.g., school-sponsored post-secondary financial aid workshops hosted in response to parent feedback).

Two Components of Parent-School Partnerships[14]

Parental Involvement

Parents **participate** in activities **dictated by school administrators and teachers**, such as parent-teacher conferences, parenting skills training, or school-wide open houses.

+

Parent Engagement

School staff and parents co-develop activities and training that support parents and cultivate meaningful partnerships. Parental engagement strategies consistently involve parents' input and **share decision-making power**.

Successful secondary schools target both parent involvement and parent engagement. In fact, the parent involvement model profiled on **page 14** incorporates elements of parent engagement (e.g., joint decision-making.) Moreover, many of the practices in this report facilitate both parent engagement and parent involvement.

10) Witte, Amanda and Sheridan, Susan, "Family Engagement in Rural Schools," *National Center for Research on Rural Education*, June 2011. https://r2ed.unl.edu/resources/downloads/2011-wp/2011_2_Witte_Sheridan.pdf. Accessed October 14, 2019.
11) "Involvement or Engagement," *Education Leadership,* 68(8) 2011. http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may11/vol68/num08/Involvement-or-Engagement¢.aspx. Accessed October 21, 2019.
12) Ishimaru and Lott, "Charting a Course to Equitable Collaboration: Learning from Parent Engagement Initiatives in the Road Map Project," *University of Washington*, 2014. https://education.uw.edu/sites/default/files/research/projects/epsc/EquitableCollaborationReport_0.pdf. Accessed October 17, 2019.
13) Ibid.
14) "Collaborating for Success Parent Engagement Toolkit," *Michigan Department of Education*, 2011. https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/4a._Final_Toolkit_without_bookmarks_370151_7.pdf. Accessed October 17, 2019.

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3) Academic Engagement Strategies

Informing Parents

Provide Academic Information and Resources to Help Parents Engage with Secondary-Level Academic Content

Research shows that parents of secondary students' may not know how to support their students academically due to the significant differences between elementary and secondary schools. While parents of elementary school students can attend school-based activities or assist with basic homework assignments, parents may feel unqualified to provide assistance when their students reach secondary school, begin to work on more complex assignments, and seek autonomy from their parents.[15] Further, secondary students may share information about school with parents less readily than elementary school students.[16]

Though parents may not be able to help secondary students complete their assignments, parents can still help students set deadlines, keep track of projects, and remain organized. Thus, administrators should prioritize strategies to inform parents about requirements for student assignments so that parents can provide organizational support more easily. In addition, school staff should consider strategies (e.g., homework assignments that require an interview with a relative) that engage parents with their students' academic work regardless of parents' familiarity with secondary-level academic concepts.[17]

Strategies to Keep Parents Informed About Secondary Students' Academics[18]

Communicate Course Information

Educators can create physical documents and posts online that clearly communicate course objectives, homework policies, and important deadlines.

Provide Grade Interpretation Support

Educators should clearly articulate criteria for report card grades and explain how to interpret interim progress reports. Educators can use online posts, phone calls, e-mails, and in-person meetings to provide this support.

Connect Parents with Community Resources

School staff (e.g., counselors) and educators can compile a list of community programs (e.g., health services, tutors), volunteer opportunities, summer programs, and after-school opportunities that parents can review with their students or reference if they are in need of services. Moreover, school staff can host informational sessions to introduce these resources and conduct follow-up appointments via phone, e-mail or in-person with parents who express interest

15) Taylor, Tim and Dounay, Jennifer, "Strengthening Parents' Ability to Provide the Guidance and Support that Matter Most in High School,' *Education Commission of the States*, August 2008. http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/78/48/7848.pdf. October 14, 2019.
16) "Tips for Communicating with Your Teen," *Child Mind Institute*, https://childmind.org/article/tips-communicating-with-teen/. October 17, 2019.
17) "Partnering with Families of Middle School and High School Students," *Ohio Department of Education*. https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Family-and-Community-Engagement/Framework-for-Building-Partnerships-Among-Schools/Middle-SchoolHigh-School.pdf.aspx. October 16, 2019.
18) Ibid; "Connect Families to Community-Based Services and Resources," *PennState Extension*, 2017, https://extension.psu.edu/programs/betterkidcare/news/2017/connect-families. Accessed October 21, 2019.

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Use Homework Assignments to Engage Parents with Academics[19]

To ensure that parents engage with their students' academics—rather than waiting for parents to access provided information and resources—educators should consider assigning students to interview a family member as a component of a homework assignment or long-term project. Moreover, for long-term projects, educators should consider creating contracts for parents and students to sign that clearly articulate deadlines and hold parents and students accountable to them.

High Educational Aspirations

Use Workshops, Regular Contact, and Involvement Opportunities to Empower Parents to Hold High Educational Aspirations for Their Students

Research shows that parents do not need to supervise students' homework to meaningfully impact their students' academic careers—rather, parents most significantly impact secondary students' academic outcomes through high educational aspirations (e.g., expectations for student academic commitment and success).[20] To ensure that parents possess and communicate high educational aspirations for students, administrators can implement programming and initiatives that empower parents to provide this type of academic support for their adolescents.[21] These school initiative should focus on encouraging specific, research-backed positive parent behaviors that demonstrate high educational aspirations.

19) "Partnering with Families of Middle School and High School Students," *Ohio Department of Education*. https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Family-and-Community-Engagement/Framework-for-Building-Partnerships-Among-Schools/Middle-SchoolHigh-School.pdf.aspx. Accessed October 21, 2019.
20) Fan, Xitao and Chen, Michael, "Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis," *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(1), 2001. http://pages.erau.edu/~andrewsa/Project_2/Christian_John/DuneProject/Child%20Success.pdf. Accessed October 14, 2019.
21) Ferguson, Chris and Rodriguez, Victor, "Engaging Families at the Secondary Level: What Schools Can Do to Support Family Involvement," *National Center for family and Community Connects with Schools*, July 2005. http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/rb/rb3-Secondary.pdf. October 14, 2019

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School Actions to Promote Positive Parent Behaviors that Demonstrate High Educational Aspirations[22]

Behavior

Parents **regularly talk** to their student about school

School Action

School staff **contact parents frequently** through:

- Regular phone calls to share positive feedback from class
- Posts on-line with course objectives and information
- Meetings to discuss student progress at flexible times (e.g., in the evenings, on weekends)

Behavior

Parents help their student **make plans for postsecondary education** or careers

School Action

School staff **hold workshops or meetings** to discuss:

- Postsecondary applications
- Financing postsecondary education
- Courses students can take to position themselves for college or career success

See **page 10** for more information.

Behavior

Parents **keep their student focused** on learning and homework during the school year

School Action

School staff encourage parents to **hold students accountable** through:

- Parent-student-teacher contracts for long-term assignments
- Clear communication of important dates and deadlines
- Homework assignments that require participation from parents or other relatives

Counselors and teachers should help students plan for the future and help families support academic instruction. For a list of ways to help counselors and teachers do so, see **Appendix A**.

Consider Developing a Series of Post-Secondary Workshops to Engage Parents as Partners

Parents of secondary students from at-risk demographic groups (e.g., low-income, minority) are less likely to expect that their student will attend college, which can prevent those parents from effectively providing academic support at home. School staff should actively build parent's high educational aspirations for their students through programming that provides basic information about college access and affordability.[23]

For more information on Parent University, see **pages 31-34** of EAB's study **Closing the College Access Gap**.

For example, Fresno Unified School District—a district with high concentrations of poverty and diversity—typically reached only the most vocal parents or those with enough background knowledge of the school system to advocate for their student. After attempting several ineffective parent engagement strategies, administrators developed a centralized set of modules offered through a program the district called Parent University. The modules, derived from the 80-page district handbook, cover topics across the K-12 system, enabling communication of information from all departments in a central format. At Fresno Unified School District, participation in Parent University doubled in two years.[24]

16%

Average increase in high-school parent knowledge after module completion.

22) Ferguson, Chris and Rodriguez, Victor, "Engaging Families at the Secondary Level: What Schools Can Do to Support Family Involvement," *National Center for family and Community Connects with Schools*, July 2005. http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/rb/rb3-Secondary.pdf. October 14, 2019.
23) "Closing the College Access Gap," *EAB*, 2017.
24) Ibid.

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Purpose and Key Characteristics of Parent University

Parent University at Fresno Unified School District…

Centralizes delivery of parent engagement initiatives

Scaffolds information on college going into grade-relevant milestones

Transforms lengthy handbook into six-week learning modules

Links families to district and community resources to build capacity

Translates modules into major languages of the district (e.g., Spanish).

To ensure that Parent University successfully engages parents, school staff used…

1. **Targeted Content**
   Sessions contain content targeted to the needs of district parents
2. **Flexible Scheduling**
   Sessions available at times convenient for parents
3. **Cultural Sensitivity**
   Meetings conducted in parents' primary language
4. **Community Partnerships**
   Familiar community-based organizations increase parent comfort
5. **Personal Outreach**
   Phone calls and home visits connect with most hard-to-reach parents
6. **Content and Strategy Alignment**
   Content supports strategic goals of individual school departments

Though the district offers parent university modules throughout all grades, modules offered in secondary school focus specifically on postsecondary attainment.

Parent University Modules for Parents of High School Students

9th

Transition to high school, preparing for college and career in the short and long term

Overview of higher education system and exposure to college options

Monitoring academic progress, tools available to keep students on track, connecting with advisors

10th

Career Technical Education options

State college admission course requirements and AP opportunities

SAT and ACT exams: importance, associated fees and available waivers

Setting realistic goals and career mapping

11th

Building relationships with your student, discussing postsecondary options

Alternative education and credit recovery

Introduction to college financing, basic timelines, and major deadlines

12th

Application and admission requirements

Giving campus tours to parents

Filling out the FAFSA, scholarship opportunities

Enrollment and matriculation processes

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4) Strategies for Parent Subgroups

Welcoming All Parents

Develop Targeted Engagement Strategies to Welcome Disengaged Parents to the Secondary School

Administrators' and educators' impressions of specific parents or groups of parents as "disengaged" may stem from a common misunderstanding: traditional parental involvement initiatives (e.g., parent-teacher conferences) often fail to recognize the unique experiences and leadership qualities of nontraditional (i.e., single parents and custodial grandparents) parents and families from underrepresented backgrounds. Furthermore, these initiatives may minimize these parents' agency.[25]

Misinterpreting Nominally Disengaged Parents

Parent Behaviors

Parents who do not believe administrators seriously consider their opinions, input, and feedback often choose not to engage with teachers or the district at all.

Administrator Misconceptions

When nontraditional and/or diverse parents choose not to participate in traditional parental involvement activities, administrators often dismiss these parents as disengaged in their student's learning and the district.

For more information on how on two-way communication, engagement committees, and culturally responsive parent engagement at the district level, see **pages 7-11** of EAB's report **Strategies to Engage Parents and Guardians at School Districts**.

However, research suggests that all parents, regardless of race and class background, care about their student's education, and administrators should not assume parents are disinterested. [26] To meaningfully develop relationships with nominally disengaged parents, administrators should design engagement strategies in response to specific obstacles these parents experience.

Engagement committees can help district administrators connect with families from varying backgrounds to learn about the needs and perspectives of families across the district. These committees can help ensure that families from across the district participate in identifying relevant engagement strategies.[27] At the secondary level, these committees can also include students.[28]

Assess Parents' Needs Before Designing Programming for Parents

To respect parents as equal partners, recognize their potential contributions, and welcome them to the school, administrators should solicit feedback from parents about how administrators can best help parents communicate high educational aspirations. Administrators can use surveys to solicit this feedback. For more information on parent engagement surveys, see **pages 16-18** of EAB's report **Strategies to Engage Parents and Guardians at School Districts**.

25) Ishimaru and Lott, "Charting a Course to Equitable Collaboration: Learning from Parent Engagement Initiatives in the Road Map Project," *University of Washington*, 2014; Kathryn Torres, et.al., "Building Relationships, Bridging Cultures," *University of Washington College of Education*, 2015
26) Ibid.
27) Nancy Bodenhausen and Margit Birge, "Family Engagement Toolkit: Continuous Improvement through an Equity Lens", *California Department of Education,* 2017, https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/documents/family-engagement.pdf. Accessed October 17, 2019.
28) "Actional Team for Partnerships," *National Network of Partnership Schools*. Accessed October 15, 2019.

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Rural, Minority, and Low-Income Parents

Create Flexible Parent Involvement and Engagement Programming to Accommodate Rural Families

Parents in rural school districts often live far from their student's school, and parents may live even further from their student's secondary school than they did during their student's elementary school years, presenting an obstacle to their participation in school-based programming. Rural residents also experience high rates of poverty. [29] In addition, though 78 percent of rural residents in 2010 were white, some rural areas are known as "majority minority tracts" (e.g., rural areas in Nevada where the majority of the population is Native American).[30] Factors such as poverty and racial minority status present additional obstacles to parent engagement.

Barriers for Rural, Minority, and Low-Income Parents

Parents more likely to have

Inflexible work schedules

Experiences of discrimination or racism

Parents more likely to lack

Reliable transportation

Childcare

Comfort navigating school system

Therefore, administrators should consider strategies to accommodate parents who may wish to engage with their student's school but cannot do so without flexibility.

Tactics to Provide Flexibility for Rural Parents[31]

- ☑ Hold meetings with parents at convenient times, including mornings, lunchtime, evenings, and weekends.
- ☑ Schedule home visits when necessary for parent-educator meetings.
- ☑ Create parent resource centers to promote and coordinate all parent involvement activities, support, and information.
- ☑ Coordinate bus or carpool service to and from school parent activities.
- ☑ Provide childcare during parent involvement activities.
- ☑ Select parent advocates to reach traditionally disengaged parents and communicate their unique needs back to school staff.

29) Witte, Amanda and Sheridan, Susan, "Family Engagement in Rural Schools," *National Center for Research on Rural Education*, June 2011. https://r2ed.unl.edu/resources/downloads/2011-wp/2011_2_Witte_Sheridan.pdf. Accessed October 14, 2019; "Search for Public School Districts," *National Center for Education Statistics*.
30) "Race and Ethnicity in Rural America," *Housing Assistance Council*, April 2012. http://www.ruralhome.org/storage/research_notes/rrn-race-and-ethnicity-web.pdf. Accessed October 28, 2019.
31) Witte, Amanda and Sheridan, Susan, "Family Engagement in Rural Schools," *National Center for Research on Rural Education*, June 2011. https://r2ed.unl.edu/resources/downloads/2011-wp/2011_2_Witte_Sheridan.pdf. Accessed October 14, 2019; "Search for Public School Districts," *National Center for Education Statistics*.

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For High-Mobility Families, Consider an Interactive, Parent-Teacher Journal to Engage Parents[31]

To engage the parents of students who move frequently throughout the year, educators should interpret parental disengagement as an opportunity to reach out to offer support. Educators should consider phone calls as an alternative to in-person meetings for these parents. Research also recommends that teachers facilitate two-way communication through a parent-teacher journal. Teachers can use either a physical journal, which the student can transfer back and forth, or a platform such as Google Docs.

Grandparents

Equip Educators With Resources to Engage Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Grandparents raising grandchildren face specific challenges (e.g., financial sustainability, isolation from support networks) that prevent them from engaging with their student's school.[33] To position the school as a partner for grandparents and thus improve their engagement with the school, administrators should equip educators with information about resources available to this specific population of caregivers.

For more information on how to train educators to work with grandparents, see **page 14** of EAB's report **Strategies to Engage Parents and Guardians at School Districts**.

Resources for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Grandfacts: State Fact Sheet For Grandfamilies (Nevada)

This document provides information on public benefits, educational assistance, and legal services for grandparents raising grandchildren in the state of Nevada.

Resources for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

This webpage serves as a repository of general tips, national networks, and federal laws for grandparents raising grandchildren in the United States. The webpage also provides links to:

- Financial resources
- Health services
- Legal aid
- Childcare services

32) Moore, Jan, "Research Summary: Teaching and Classroom strategies for Homeless and Highly Mobile Students," *National Center for Homeless Education*, August 2014. https://www.stetson.edu/artsci/education/home/media/classroom-strategies.pdf. Accessed October 16, 2019.
33) "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Face Unique Challenges," *AARP*, March 23, 2010. https://www.aarp.org/relationships/grandparenting/info-03-2010/grandparents-raising-grandchildren-face-unique-challenges.html. Accessed October 16, 2019.

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5) Evidence-Based Programs

Programs

Considering Using Pre-Existing Resources to Involve and Engage Parents of Secondary Students

Administrators can use evidence-backed resources and services to facilitate parent-school partnerships. For schools interested in improving parent involvement, the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University offers research-backed guidance. At schools interested in improving parent engagement, administrators may be interested in the Nine-Week Parent Engagement in Education program from the Parent Institute for Quality Education.

Comparing Two Resources for Building Parent-School Relationships

	National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS)	Nine-Week Parent Engagement in Education Program
Originated by	Johns Hopkins University	Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE)
Focus	Parent involvement	Parent engagement
Description	NNPS helps schools of all levels develop a program for family involvement and implement the program through a stakeholder committee. Members receive a copy of NNPS' Handbook for Action.	PIQE's nine-part program teaches parents how to engage meaningfully with their students' school. The program promotes a college-going culture and can help build high educational aspirations. Research from San Diego State University, Claremont Graduate University, and California Partnership of Achieving Student Success supports the program.
Cost	$500, $250 annual renewal fee	Contact Patricia Mayer-Ochoa, Vice President of Program Development at (619) 420-4499 or (619) 884-7926.

NNPS uses a research-backed framework that encourages parent involvement in six areas:

- **Parenting**: Empower parents to structure students' home life for school success
- **Communication**: Build effective two-way communication between school and home
- **Volunteering**: Organize flexible, varied opportunities for parent volunteers
- **Learning at Home**: Encourage parent participation in schoolwork
- **Decision-Making**: Elevate parents as equal partners
- **Community Collaboration**: Position the school as an essential member of the community

For schools in New Mexico, PIQE offers:

- **PIQE Boot Camp**: A week-long training for school staff to learn parent recruitment strategies, facilitator training, and curriculum orientation.
- **Site Visits**: PIQE staff visit participating districts twice a year to conduct additional training.
- **On-Demand Telephone Conversations**: PIQE staff continuously provide implementation support
- **Additional Services**: If requested, for an additional cost, PIQE provides:
  - A four-month follow-up parent coaches program
  - A teachers' workshop on effective parent engagement

Additional Resources for Parent Engagement

- **The Family Engagement for High School Success Toolkit**. Originated by the Harvard Family Research Project, this free resource can help administrators plan and implement an initiative to support at-risk students through family engagement.
- **Family Engagement Online Course**. Created by the National Dropout Prevention Center, educators and school staff can use this module to learn how to effectively reach out to parents to prevent dropouts ($99).

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Research Methodology

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member institution approached the Forum with the following questions:

- What are successful strategies that districts can use to engage families of secondary students with their students' academic progress beyond parent-teacher conferences?
- What are common obstacles that impede family engagement at the secondary level, and how can districts overcome those challenges?
- How can districts design family engagement programming to target traditionally disengaged parents at the secondary level?
- Does the available research provide strategies to improve family attendance at engagement initiatives in districts with any of the following characteristics:
  - High mobility rates?
  - High poverty?
  - Rural?
  - Significant percentage of non-parent guardians?
- Are there comprehensive, evidence-based programs—similar to Academic Parent Teacher Teams—for family engagement at the secondary level?

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Appendix A

The *Southwest Educational Development Laboratory* recommends the following strategies to help school staff effectively involve and engage parents in the report **Engaging Families at the Secondary Level: What Schools Can Do to Support Family Involvement**.

To Assist Families in Helping Students Plan for the Future

Counselors or teachers can

- Hold monthly workshops for upper-grade-level students and their families. Each workshop topic could be devoted to a specific aspect of college planning.
- Plan a series of workshops for lower-grade-level students and their families during the spring when students are making their course selections for the next school year.
- Plan a series of events for freshmen and their families to explore future careers by working with local businesses. These events could involve job shadowing, job exploration, and course selection.
- Coordinate with the middle school counselors to hold several planning events in the spring for 8th graders and their families. These events might focus on course selection and planning for the future.

Teachers can

- Create special assignments that require students to talk to family members, business owners, or others in the community about their futures. For example, students can create research reports for a history class about the difference in work requirements for a job that existed 30 years ago and a similar position today; in math, students can interview former students or older relatives or friends who are college graduates about the costs of college and create a budget for their own goals; or in English, students can create a special-edition newspaper featuring stories on former students who are now college graduates.

Families can

- Talk to their children on a regular basis to discover what is actually happening in school. Children often reply "Nothing" when their parents ask them "What did you do in school today?" But, if asked how a specific test, homework assignment, or special event went, the child will give a more informative answer.
- Work with their children to set goals each year. This will require that parents learn about graduation requirements and different graduation plans.

To Assist Families in Supporting Academic Instruction

Counselors can

- Conduct workshops for families on the information on the school's report card and explain other information that will provide families with an overview of testing expectations for students.
- Work with teachers to provide course content information sheets for families so students can make better course selection choices.

Teachers can

- Invite family members to observe teaching strategies so they can assist students at home.
- Organize math, science, or other content area nights or events and invite families to attend. Generally, these events use a learning center approach, involving family members and students in collaborative problem solving or content exploration. This is a great opportunity to engage families in interactive processes and teach them what is being taught to the students.
- Call families and ask them if they need help with assisting their children with homework. These calls can be used to help determine workshops that could be offered to family members to assist them in supporting student learning.
- Post class assignments, timelines, and test dates electronically so families can keep track of when students should be studying or might need assistance

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Families can

- Monitor student progress daily to determine when students need assistance or when the family member needs to get help in order to provide the needed assistance to the student.
- Create a calendar to help all parents stay informed on school events or activities.
- Participate on improvement teams that the school creates.

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