



## Family Engagement: Priority or Lip Service?

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With the new school year under way, now is a good time for districts and schools to reflect on the question: "In our district or school is family engagement truly a priority or do we pay it lip service?" (Hence, the lips).

Family engagement is currently included throughout federal law in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other federal initiatives, such as, Race to The Top, Safe and Supportive Schools, and the Turnaround Principles. In fact, you would be hard pressed to find a federal initiative that does not include family engagement as an integral component.

So, if family engagement is to become a priority in Kansas districts and schools what must educators and administrators do? Dr. Karen Mapp, a leading researcher on family engagement and a senior lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education believes family engagement begins by embracing the following four core values. Do we as educators and administrators believe: 1) all parents/families have BIG dreams for their children? 2) parents/families can support their children's learning? 3) parents/families are equal partners? 4) educators need to lead in building these relationships? Let's explore each of these core values.

All parents/families have BIG dreams for their children. As educators, we would do well to ask parents and other family members what their hopes and dreams are for their children. Besides giving us the opportunity to listen to families, this

experience often provides us with insights into family values and the opportunity to hear personal stories of past educational struggles or success. Creating a welcoming environment is necessary for parents and family members to feel safe enough to comfortably relate these hopes and dreams.

Parents/families can support their children's learning. As educators, we must believe in the capacity of parents to support their children's learning. By providing parents and family members with information and data on their children's learning, parents can become more supportive at home. Parents desire simple tips and tools of how to support their child's learning at home. By sharing information and data with parents, we expand the job description of parents and invite them to become "partners" in their children's education.

Parents/families are equal partners in their children's education. A good question to explore is, "Do parents/families of our students consider themselves equal partners in their children's education?" If the answer is "yes," celebrate! If the answer is "no," find out why. Ask what would move them to consider themselves as partners in their children's learning. Becoming equal partners should not be a scary concept to educators but rather one that emphasizes the different roles we each play as parents and educators. The roles are different, but we share the same goal – to educate their children. Parents hold "funds of knowledge" that can help us teach their children in the classroom.

Educators need to lead in building these relationships. Families may feel intimidated by us. It is our responsibility to bridge the gap between school and home by extending our hand and saying, "Welcome." We need to take the first step to building relationships with families and invite them and their children to a new year of learning!

*Have a great school year!*

Direct link to our website:

[www.KansasASD.com](http://www.KansasASD.com)

[www.TASNBehaviorSupports.com](http://www.TASNBehaviorSupports.com)

### **TIPS FROM THE CORNER:**

With your school year under way, now is the time to reflect upon how effectively you implemented two of the four key practices proven to impact yearlong success outlined in last month's newsletter.

#### **1) Positive Relationships**

Continue to be positive and enthusiastic; share information about yourself. Be approachable. Let students and parents know when you are available for contact during the school day or before or after school. Have you connected with each student in your classroom on a non-academic topic? Review the information from student inventories. In secondary classrooms, conduct a student activity that groups students into categories based on their interests to communicate your desire to get to know your students. The single most important factor in preventing a child from dropping out of school is whether or not they have one trusting relationship with a school staff member. Be the teacher who makes a difference in a student's life.

#### **2) Expectations and Procedures**

Continue to explicitly teach expectations and procedures like you teach academic skills following the Teach Show Practice Feedback model. Prioritize safety expectations. For example, teach primary students how to line-up safely. Show/model an arm's length space or use visual markers on the floor for each student that defines required distance between students. Use adults to show the non-example with close proximity to demonstrate a safety issue of stepping on toes and tripping. Provide opportunities for safe practice and use specific feedback for following line-up procedure. Share your expectations for a

## October Trainings

**October 1, 3:00-3:45; 4:00-4:45**

Tri-State ASD Webinar Series: Preparing for Non-Routine Events

Link to register: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NV7SCRP>

**October 7-8**

Autism Interdisciplinary Team  
Registration closed

**October 15, 3:00-3:45; 4:00-4:45**

Tri-State ASD Webinar Series: Supporting Literacy in Individuals

Link to register: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NVZFKYS>

**October 16, 8:30 am-10:00 am**

ASD Screening Tools for Children Birth to 21

Link to register: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ZSMMY9S>

**October 20-22**

TBST Functional Assessment Based Interventions Training

Registration closed

**October 22, 3:00-3:34; 4:00-4:45**

Two Part Series: How to Develop an Autism Parent Training Series in your District and Increase Collaboration and Engagement with Families

Link to register for part 1: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/N7DHL6R>

Link to register for part 2: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/N7Y2RME>

learning environment filled with mutual respect for all. In secondary classrooms, you might teach the definition of mutual respect as sharing ideas without judgment, listening to each other's ideas, waiting your turn to speak and share. Show/demonstrate what mutual respect looks like and sounds like: eyes on speaker, listening position, "That's one idea, I have another idea." Design an activity that allows students an opportunity to practice the expectation and provide feedback during the practice activity. If students require redirection, be certain to restate what students are "To do" using the words of your explicitly taught expectation or procedure, not what they need "to stop doing".

