

Increasing Support for Equitable Family Engagement 2023-24 Legislative Priority

WSPTA recognizes that family engagement is a full and equitable partnership among families, educators, providers and communities, and is a critical component for student success at all ages.

Background

- Partnerships between schools, families, and communities have long been a key strategy to improve student achievement through the coordination of student supports and the leveraging of resources for struggling schools.⁽¹⁾
- Evidence supports the importance of family engagement for student achievement and social development over time. Research shows a variety of links between effective family engagement and student success⁽²⁾, including better homework completion, attention during school, participation rates, and better attendance.
- Families and educators do not come to this work with fundamental skills in how best to partner with each other to ensure success for students. Educators receive little training in engaging families and report feeling under-prepared, despite valuing relationships with families.⁽³⁾
- Given the long history of academic marginalization of non-white students, participating within schools can be challenging for BIPOC families. Unless district staff actively break-down barriers to participation, low-income families, migrant families, families of color, and non-traditional families can feel unwelcome and unprepared to play active roles in schools.⁽⁴⁾
- Currently, the prototypical schools funding model only allocates 0.103 FTE Family Engagement Coordinator per 500 student FTE at the elementary level (about 1 hour a day of staffing) and 0 FTE for the middle and high school levels.⁽⁵⁾
- The OSPI Family Engagement Workgroup final recommendations include:⁽⁵⁾
 - The legislature should require the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to finalize and adopt a Washington State Family Engagement Framework.
 - OSPI and Office of the Educations Ombuds (OEO) should collaborate to create a toolkit for schools and school districts for the implementation of this framework.
 - The legislature should ensure appropriate staffing levels including family engagement support in all school buildings.
 - The legislature should provide the necessary funding and structure for support for family engagement including stipends for family members who serve on committees and advisory groups, childcare, language (interpretation and translation) and disability access.

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For More Information

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- The state should explore a system of paid leave available for parents to use for family engagement activities and meetings.
- The Professional Educator Standards Board should review Standards and Learning Progressions for Teachers and for alignment with the Washington Family Engagement Framework and issue any supplemental materials as necessary.
- The Criterion 7 of the Teacher Evaluation Criteria and Descriptors and Criterion 8 of the Principal Evaluation Criteria and Descriptors and the associated Instructional and Leadership Frameworks should be updated to align with the values, principles, and elements of this framework.

Proposed Solutions

Washington State PTA shall advocate for legislation or policies that:

- Require adoption and implementation of the Washington State Family Engagement Framework, with funding and technical assistance for school district implementation.
- Expand the ratio of family engagement coordinators in middle and high schools.
- Reduce barriers for caregivers to participate on workgroups, committees, or other engagement opportunities.
- Fund family engagement professional learning for all educators.

Citations

- (1) [\(PDF\) Rewriting the Rules of Engagement: Elaborating a Model of District-Community Collaboration \(researchgate.net\)](#) July 2014 Harvard Educational Review 84(2):188-21
- (2) Strategies for Equitable Family Engagement (2018) Villegas, A. and Jacques, C. (https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/10/equitable_family_engag_508.pdf)
- (3) Mapp, K. L., & Kuttner, P. J. (2013). Partners in education: A dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships. U.S. Department of Education. <https://sedl.org/pubs/framework/FE-Cap-Building.pdf>
- (4) Spectrum of Family & Community Engagement for Educational Equity (2020) Gonzales, R. et al (<https://movementstrategy.org/resources/spectrum-of-family-community-engagement-for-educational-equity/>)
- (5) OSPI Family Engagement Framework Workgroup Report (2021) https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/workgroups/FEF/Family%20Engagement%20Framework%202021%20Report_Final.pdf