



Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001
www.isbe.net

Gery J. Chico
Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

FACT SHEET FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

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Families play a crucial role in nurturing their children's healthy development and education. They influence their children's success in the classroom in a number of ways, from making sure a student is well fed and at school on time to helping with homework and attending school planning meetings. Decades of research also show that children with involved parents have better school attendance, increased motivation, better self-esteem, lower suspension rates, decreased drug and alcohol use, fewer instances of violent behavior and overall higher grades, test scores and graduation rates. The earlier a parent becomes involved in their child's education, the more powerful the impact.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) recognizes the tremendous value of engaged families and has drafted a set of principles and strategies to help districts and schools form significant and productive partnerships with families. This draft guidance, called the Family Engagement Framework, has been developed by a committee representing multiple programs and perspectives on the role of families in education. The Framework recommends the following four research-based principles to encourage more sustained and meaningful family participation:

- Develop systems that support family engagement.
- Build welcoming and supportive environments.
- Enhance communication with parents.
- Include parents in decision making.

Parents can read a draft of the Framework and provide their feedback at <http://www.illinoisparents.org/ISBE.aspx>.

Meaningful family engagement is based on the belief that parents, educators and community members all share responsibility for a child's academic, physical, social, emotional and behavioral development.

Linking family engagement efforts with learning and healthy development helps students and schools reach positive outcomes. Families have a stake in all aspects of our education system and are key partners in every area of school improvement. ISBE's family engagement guidance is tied to ISBE's Eight Essential Elements for Effective Education.

Suggested Questions Parents Can Ask to Start the School Year

- How did you get into teaching?
- What do you like about it?
- What's on the curriculum this year?
- What activities do you do?
- What are some of the bigger projects this school year that we should plan for?
- Approximately how much homework should we expect each night?
- How have the new Illinois Learning Standards changed your approach or lesson plans?
- What does my child need to take to class?

The chart below lists those eight essential elements with suggested questions and participation tips to

help parents and community members work with educators to support students.

Element for Effective Education	Questions for Parents to Consider	How Parents Can Help
Comprehensive Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What services are available for children and families? ➤ How are school resources being allocated? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Actively serve on school and/or district school improvement teams. ➤ Connect with other families and encourage their involvement at school, in the home and their community.
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What are the learning expectations for my child? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Know your school's curriculum, standards and expectations for your child.
Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What lessons and materials are going to be used? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Volunteer in the school and attend events. ➤ Ask the teacher about what your child is learning and how you can support his/her growth.
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What does my child know and how is my child doing? ➤ What areas should we focus on for improvement? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Give the school feedback on demonstrations made outside of school about what children know and are able to do. This is sometimes sought through parent questionnaires. ➤ Regularly request to see your child's assessment data or, if available, log in to the school's parent portal.
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How are teachers and leaders prepared to serve my child? ➤ How can I support their professional development with what I know? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Participate in trainings and professional development opportunities for parents/parent leaders.
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What leadership roles can I play to support education? ➤ Do I know who the school leaders are and what decisions they're making? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Build relationships with school administrators, teachers and other support personnel.
Family & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What opportunities exist for me to get involved in different ways and at different levels in the school? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Connect to the community by establishing relationships, participating in activities and reaching out to others for support and/or giving support to others. ➤ Reach out to services and resources in the community that can help you and other families as needed.
Conditions for Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How does the school environment support my child and how can it be improved to support all aspects of my child's education, including language and culture? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Share information about your family and child's strengths and needs with the school. ➤ Adapt to challenges by working together on problems as a family. ➤ Establish and maintain clear expectations that are fair; define what your child can or cannot do; encourage communication about tough topics; and help meet the needs of the family.

ISBE's resources help schools and districts know what a parent-friendly environment and school culture should look like and provide the policies and tools to get there. District staff can help parents understand and interpret rules, laws and policies related to their rights and responsibilities in their children's education. They can also explain the data collected about their child and how it affects teaching methods in the classroom. Schools can empower parents to be involved in local decisions and solicit their input in addressing issues and solving problems by making sure family members are an active part of school improvement planning teams and advisory boards. Schools that clearly communicate what's expected of students, the learning standards and classroom curriculum help families and students prepare for the school year.

The following resources are available to help parents start conversations with their child's teachers and school leaders and stay up to date on current education initiatives:

ISBE Family Resources

- **Illinois Learning Standards** – www.isbe.net/common_core/htmls/resources.htm
- **Learning Supports** – www.isbe.net/learningsupports/html/partnerships.htm
- **Special Education** – www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/parents.htm
- **English Language Learning** – www.isbe.net/bilingual/htmls/ellparents.htm
- **Parental Involvement: Title I, Part A Non-Regulatory Guidance** – www.isbe.net/grants/pdf/parent_involvement_guide.pdf
- **Illinois School Report Card** – www.illinoisreportcard.com

ISBE-Funded Resources for Families

- **Academic Development Institute** – www.IllinoisParents.org
- **Illinois Early Learning Project** – <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/>

External Resources for Families

- **Illinois PTA** – <http://www.illinoispta.org/index.html>
- **U.S. Department of Education** – <http://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html>
- **MALDEF** – <http://www.maldef.org/leadership/programs/psp/index.html>