Community Engagement Initiative 2.0
Parents/Caregivers as Equal Partners Module
MAYA/FIS COLLABORATIVE WORKSPACE

<u>Glossary:</u>

Outline - references the [module outline](#) we have developed as a collaborative

*FIS Inpu*t - space for FIS to note any "must-have" content, ideas, resources, and links to guide MAYA in writing content for these sections.

<u>Guidance:</u> Participants should be able to complete each section in approximately 8 mins (1,600 - 2,000 words total).

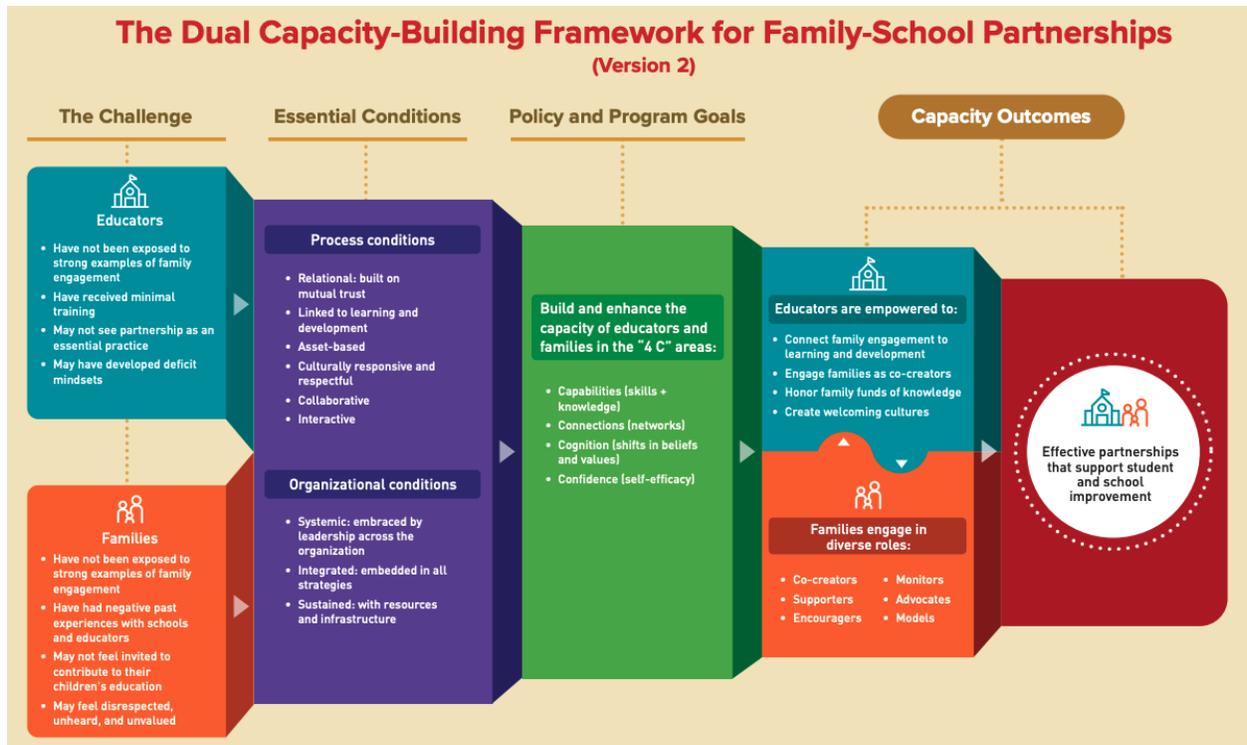| Section 2	Why is family and caregiver engagement important? Consider the 7Cs *(reference made by San Diego COE)*
Outline	Uplifting families and caregivers as experts a. Understanding community assets
FIS Input	

Outline	The Benefits of Positive Family Engagement
	    b. Improved student outcomes
	    c. Strengthened trust between schools and communities

FIS Input	

Outline	Asset-based Family Engagement Framework
	    d. The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership
	    e. More meaningful engagement across the spectrum

FIS Input	

Leveraging Family Assets to Transform Student Outcomes

Decades of research demonstrate the link between positive outcomes and meaningful engagement between families and schools. Schools that build strong, relational connections with families, students, and communities show improvements in school readiness, literacy, mathematics, social-emotional skills, and even high school graduation rates.[1] In addition to academic outcomes, strong school-family partnerships are key to positively improving school culture, families' sense of belonging, and community well-being.[2]

In addition to the decades of data and research showing the links between student outcomes and family engagement, there is a growing body of research highlighting best practices, innovations, and learnings about how educators can more effectively partner with families. One of the most comprehensive, evidence-based school-family partnership models for districts and schools is the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships (Version 2), developed by Dr. Karen Mapp at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The framework is based on the premise that in order to build true school-family partnerships, districts must build the capacities of both educators and families.

---

[1] Castro, M., Exposit-Casas, E., Lopez-Martin, E., Lizasoain, L., EnriqueNavarro-Asencio, E., Gaviriaa, J. L. (2015). Parental involvement on student academic achievement: A meta-analysis. Educational Research Review, 14, 33–46;

[2] Community Science. (2018). Evaluation of the Kindred Program final report. Retrieved from: https://kindredcommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Community-Science-Evaluation-Report-2018.pdf

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships
(Version 2)

The Challenge | **Essential Conditions** | **Policy and Program Goals** | **Capacity Outcomes**

Educators
- Have not been exposed to strong examples of family engagement
- Have received minimal training
- May not see partnership as an essential practice
- May have developed deficit mindsets

Families
- Have not been exposed to strong examples of family engagement
- Have had negative past experiences with schools and educators
- May not feel invited to contribute to their children's education
- May feel disrespected, unheard, and unvalued

Process conditions
- Relational: built on mutual trust
- Linked to learning and development
- Asset-based
- Culturally responsive and respectful
- Collaborative
- Interactive

Organizational conditions
- Systemic: embraced by leadership across the organization
- Integrated: embedded in all strategies
- Sustained: with resources and infrastructure

Build and enhance the capacity of educators and families in the "4 C" areas:
- Capabilities (skills + knowledge)
- Connections (networks)
- Cognition (shifts in beliefs and values)
- Confidence (self-efficacy)

Educators are empowered to:
- Connect family engagement to learning and development
- Engage families as co-creators
- Honor family funds of knowledge
- Create welcoming cultures

Families engage in diverse roles:
- Co-creators
- Supporters
- Encouragers
- Monitors
- Advocates
- Models

Effective partnerships that support student and school improvement

Source: Mapp, Karen, and Eylan Bergman. "Dual Capacity." Dual Capacity, www.dualcapacity.org/. Accessed 25 Sept. 2023.

As described in Lesson 1 of this module, the perspectives, biases, and disposition of both families and educators are rooted both in their own lived experiences and in the historical context of their communities. If we dive deeper into understanding how educators and families interact with each other, we quickly come to realize that both educators and families have had limited exposure to strong examples of family engagement. In the case of educators, few have received professional development or training related to family engagement. For families, many have had negative experiences in schools and with teachers, may not feel welcome, or do not experience a sense of belonging in schools.

Research conducted on the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships shows that when schools and districts have a deep understanding of the challenges and create the essential conditions that build the capacity of both educators and families, that the capacity of both increases substantially. Educators are empowered to connect family engagement with student learning, engage families as co-designers, honor families, and are better able to create welcoming school environments for families. Simultaneously, families are able to engage in diverse roles as co-creators, supporters, advocates, monitors, and encouragers.

Lesson 2 of this module specifically explores the components of a community engagement self-assessment as a tool to strengthen the capacity of educators to build partnerships with families.

Uplifting Families and Caregivers as Experts

CEI defines "community engagement" as authentic partnerships amongst students, families, districts and communities that nurture relationships, build trust, ensure cultural, racial and linguistic equity, and lead transformative student outcomes**.** One of the most essential components of effective engagement is an educator's ability to uplift families and caregivers as experts, understanding family assets, and viewing families as equal partners in education, or co-educators.

In 2023, the Community Engagement Initiative commissioned the development of a Community Engagement Best Practices Self Assessment Tool to build the capacity of school districts to facilitate meaningful engagement that outlines a series of competencies that fall under the seven domains described in the table below.

CEI Self Assessment Tool Summary Table[3]

DOMAIN	COMPETENCIES
These four domains highlight practices that are applicable to deepening engagement efforts with all key community constituents, including students, families, educators, school and district leaders, and community based organizations.	
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS: Creating a foundation built on mutual trust is an essential condition for building meaningful community engagement. In addition, this foundation of mutual trust through relationships should be embraced at a systemic level by district leaders and embedded into all aspects of meaningful engagement strategies to sustain long term impact. This domain is the foundation of all other domains.	● Inclusive and welcoming district culture ● Create a culture of service ● Frequent, proactive, student, family, and community centered communication ● Crucial conversations ● With a base of belonging, students, families, and community are supported to take action.
BUILDING COLLECTIVE EFFICACY: Researchers have found that when a team of individuals "share the belief that their unified efforts can overcome challenges and produce intended results, groups are more effective." (Donohoo, Hattie, Eells 2018) Building collective efficacy positively influences the overall narrative of school improvement and encourages investment from all members of the community to contribute to a shared belief of improving outcomes for students. Evidence	● Staff mindsets ● Student, family and community mindsets ● Student, family and community connections ● Respect for student, family and community leadership ● Leadership development of student, family and community

---

[3] Estrada Darley Miller Group (2023) *CEI Community Engagement Best Practices Self Assessment Tool. Retrieved*
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qjMTW2BbzKbP6kgDPmR1DNKdXUfgoPHQrQMNoVVsY04/edit?usp=sharing

supporting the importance of collective efficacy goes beyond the classroom. At the neighborhood level, this group's belief in their own collective power is also shown to be highly related to better community outcomes (e.g., health outcomes, lower crime, strong school outcomes).	
SHARED POWER AND DECISION-MAKING: Building on domains one and two, domain three centers the importance of growing the capacity of educators, while simultaneously enhancing families and community members' power and decision-making, leading to meaningful engagement and positive outcomes for students.	• Co-developing vision • Proactively sharing information about districtwide decision-making structures and opportunities • Shared decision-making • Participatory budgeting • The district encourages, supports, and equips families and community to take initiative and contribute to school improvement priorities • The district creates multiple avenues (online and in person) so that families and community can participate in collaborative strategic planning for school improvement • Outreach to the most marginalized families and community members and removal of barriers to participation
OPERATIONS, SYSTEMS, STRUCTURES, AND RESOURCING THE WORK Systems, structures, and resource allocation play a critical role in a district's ability to effectively engage students, families, and community and sustain a culture that centers students, families, and community and develops them, and shares power in a productive way that benefits students. Schools and districts utilize the resources they have and include a wide range of invested community members in the process of resource allocation, planning, and collaborating to meet the needs of their students.	• Community-facing staff are deeply embedded in schools, depending on district size and access to resources. • District allocates meaningful resources to staffing community engagement activities • Language access • Equitable distribution of resources for student, family, and community engagement activities
These three domains highlight practices that are specific to core constituents in CEI's definition of community engagement. These are useful self-assessment tools for districts looking to deepen engagement specifically with families or students or deepen their partnerships with the community.	
FAMILIES AS CO-EDUCATORS Students achieve better outcomes in school when their parents and/or guardians are engaged in their education. Furthermore, to build authentic, meaningful engagement with parents and/or guardians, educators must disrupt deficit views of families and deepen their understanding of existing community assets that families have and can contribute to school improvement efforts that positively impact all students' educational experiences.	• Reframes the role of families as co-educators and partners in their children's education • Supports learning at home and invest in professional development and coaching • Family and community access to instructional data • Align family engagement activities with learning goals
PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES WITH STUDENTS Research shows the long lasting benefits of youth engagement for the entire community. Youth engagement promotes inclusivity in policies,	• Intentional and inclusive spaces exist for youth engagement • Align youth engagement activities with school and district learning goals

programs, services, and builds capacity for the next generation. Youth engagement improves the validity of efforts focused on young people since young people are actively included in the process and offers youth opportunities to be included in change efforts in their communities.	● Multiple avenues exist for youth engagement ● Utilize youth participatory engagement strategies as a north star
COMMUNITY AS COLLABORATORS Community and community partners are an essential element of school district change work. When the community is at the table alongside district leaders co-producing a vision for students, they help build investment for systemic change and expand access to resources for students.	● Integrate resources and services from the community into schools ● Convenes and aligns ecosystem of community partners ● Schools are seen as neighborhood hubs (i.e. deliver a range of services beyond education in order to prepare their students to learn and to assist families) and there is a high degree of trust between the community and the district ● The district regularly collects, makes use of, and shares data on the impact of community partnerships ● Strong multi-directional channels of community engagement

While authentic community engagement is an ongoing and, oftentimes, a nonlinear process, it is important for schools and districts to assess their progress in each domain. The Self Assessment tool is especially useful for school and district leaders to use to support participatory practices with students, families and community members in Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control Accountability Planning (LCAP).

Understanding and uplifting families as experts starts with shifting our mindsets to truly center our work on the strengths and assets of families. When we center families in the work of educating students, we not only validate and affirm their contributions, but also leverage their many strengths to build trusting relationships to transform the education of all students.

Reflection

Practitioners are at the heart of family engagement practices. In fact, the family-facing programs and practices schools implement are the largest predictors of family engagement in schools. While the evidence is clear that family engagement boosts student achievement and has overall positive effects across the school community, it's not always clear what family engagement looks like when done effectively. Moreover, there are individual practices that educators and family-facing professionals must embrace *and* practices that entire schools must implement to truly engage, collaborate, and lead with families as co-educators.

Take a moment here to reflect on the progress made toward building spaces where families are true partners in the education of their children under four of the domains identified in the CEI Community Engagement Self-Assessment Tool.

Building Relationships
- Are you and your team entering relationships with a sense of purpose and deep conviction that stronger relationships benefit the entire school community?
- How do you and your team(s) demonstrate trust with families?
- How much time are you and your team(s) dedicating to get to know the families in your school/district community? How much time are you spending helping families connect with one another to build social networks? What does that look like and how might you reach more families, especially those who are not currently engaged?
- How might you and your team(s) create a welcoming school culture by inviting families to be engaged in their student's education in affirming ways that uphold the diverse cultures and languages of families?
- Have you and your team(s) mapped community assets to identify community partners that can also support families?

Building Collective Efficacy
- What historical context is important to know about the communities you serve? How has this historical context impacted the children and families you serve?
- Have you and your team(s) made a commitment to become lifelong learners alongside families, not as the experts?
- How do you and your team(s) demonstrate appreciation and the value that caregivers and families of diverse backgrounds bring to their children's learning?
- What efforts are you and your team(s) making to inquire and seek to learn about the families you serve?
- Who are the hardest to reach families and communities you and your team(s) are serving? What strategies are you using to actively reach out to them to better understand their perspectives to better support them?
- Have you and your team(s) mapped community assets to identify community partners that can also support families?

Families As Co-Educators
- How do you and your team(s) engage families in authentic dialogue and create opportunities for families to shape their student's learning and educational experiences?
- Do you offer families opportunities to co-create and co-design goals, curriculum, and/or program planning in your school or district, especially those who are most

underserved? Are those opportunities accessible to all families (i.e. language, times offered, meeting locations, child care, etc.)?
- Have you and your team(s) created systems to share data with families with honesty and trust through multiple methods that are accessible to families? Similarly, have you and your team(s) created systems for families to share ongoing reflections and data on their children?
- How do you and your team(s) link families to additional learning supports in the community that are aligned to children's individual goals and interests?

Shared Power And Decision-Making:
- Do you and your team seek opportunities to continuously develop as a professional and learn alongside families by attending trainings and sharing ideas with campus leadership teams?
- How are you and your team(s) using data to evaluate, assess, review, and measure family engagement practices to make improvements? What data are you missing? How might you go about collecting missing data?
- What efforts are you and your team(s) making to advise families on their rights in the school and community as they relate to language access, school reform initiatives, and budgeting (i.e. engagement in School Site Committees and on the Local Control and Accountability Plan)?
- How can you and your team(s) create a path for families to join decision-making bodies at both the campus and district level and build policies and systems that ensure family representatives have full authority to be heard and honored?[4]

Additional Resources

- [CEI Community Engagement Self-Assessment Tool](#): The CEI Community Engagement Best Practices Self Assessment Tool was developed to support meaningful engagement among county offices of education, school districts, and communities. While this rubric is a self assessment tool for district and school leaders, students, families, and invested community members should be involved in the process of evaluating meaningful engagement.

- [NAFCSE's Family-Facing Professional's Reflection Tool](#): In 2022, the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) identified a set of core competencies for family-facing professionals to practice family engagement that help

---

[4] National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (2022) Family Engagement Core Competencies: A Body Of Knowledge, Skills, And Dispositions For Family-Facing Professionals. Retrieved: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mLRvxtRPqTljfAE1ZUM7mgs8iLcP8R9F/view; Flamboyan Foundation (2021) School-Wide Family Engagement Rubric. Retrieved: https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/cisl/iss/pubdocs/flamboyan_school_wide_family_engagement_rubric%20%281%29%20%281%29.pdf

schools and districts move toward more equitable, collaborative, and communal family-school partnerships.

- [Flamboyan Foundation School-Wide Family Engagement Rubric](): Flamboyan Foundation's School-Wide Family Engagement Rubric which was developed through extensive research and conversations with national and local experts in family engagement strategies. While the focus of this rubric is on schools, it also prompts thinking around how districts and state agencies can build stronger policies and systems to support schools along their journey toward asset-based family engagement.

| Section 4	The individual power of parents and caregivers
Outline	Individual Power: *How can I support parents to use channels to empower their advocacy as an individual? Elevate their voice. Support them.* 1. Providing resources to parents for partnering with teachers 2. Providing resources to parents for partnering with the school 3. Providing resources for parents to support the role they play at home 4. Uplifting all types of engagement–formal or informal
FIS Input	Erika, I think there are many good resources for each of these. However, I would also like for the LEA to consider the culture they can create to show parents that they are equal partners – this acknowledges their power. For example, having parents have input on the budget, or co-designing events or resources, or giving parents timely data on their child's progress and how the school is doing overall (information is power). Often schools hide this information from parents because they are afraid of how parents will react if they know their child is not at grade level or the school is a "performance improvement" school. They are afraid of their power (I wouldn't say this in the write up of the module).
Outline	Collective Power: *How can I support parents/caregivers to empower their advocacy as a collective?* 1. Engaging Community Partners f. Connect to community partners module 2. Community driven decision making 3. Formal Boards
FIS Input	Inviting parents to do classroom observations and then offer feedback is a great way to embrace parents' collective power. For parents who are interested in joining school site councils or other formal committees, what is important here is for the LEA to invest in training parents to fully take up their role.

The Individual and Collective Power of Parents & Caregivers

No matter their background, parents and caregivers want the best for their students and families. While parents and caregivers differ in their approaches and capacity to support their student's learning and growth, there are many tools and resources available to support their engagement in schools. This section of the module will focus on how to co-create and co-lead with families to leverage their individual and collective strength to transform educational outcomes for students and schools.

Co-creation and co-leadership in education require shared decision-making, collaborative planning, and active engagement of families alongside educators. In 2023, WestEd published a framework to help child-, youth-, and family-serving agencies utilize participatory systems change for equity. Drawing on participatory methods, community cultural wealth, liberatory design, and complex systems change frameworks, participatory systems change is an approach to change that centers community wisdom and collective action in order to dismantle oppressive systems and generate conditions for equity, opportunity, and well-being.[5]

WestEd's Participatory Framework is organized by seven elements of participatory systems change: 1) Connect in community; 2) See the system and center community experience; 3) Dream a vision for the future; 4) Decide priorities and goals; 5) Generate change and approaches; 6) Align policies, practices, and resources to hold change; and 7) Learn together and grow change. The figure below illustrates the connections and interdependencies between the principles and elements of participatory systems change.

Participatory Systems Change Framework[6]

---
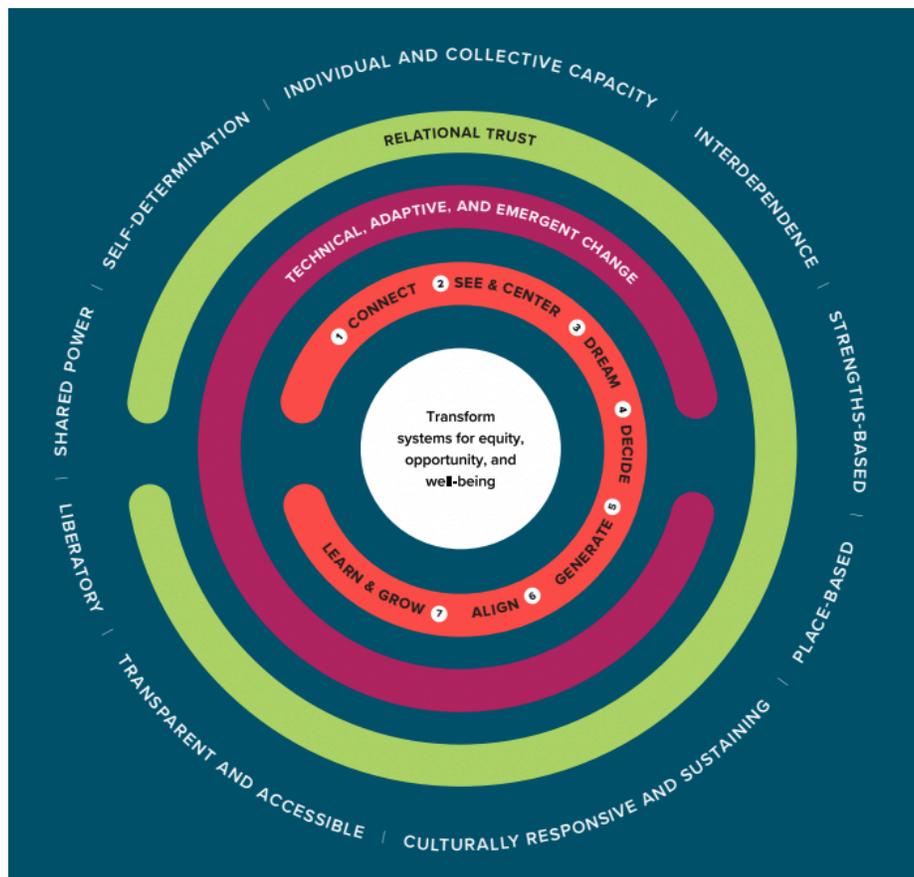
[5] Valdez, A., Cerna, R., & Hashmi, S. (2023). Participatory systems change for equity: An inquiry guide for child-, youth-, and family-serving agencies. California Center for School Climate & Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety. WestEd.
[6] Ibid.

Shared leadership with families also requires a shift from traditional partnerships with parents and caregivers to an equitable collaboration that centers the roles of families as leaders and views the role of educators and families as agents of change for entire communities. For schools and districts to move toward equitable collaborations with parents and caregivers, they must be able to harness both the individual and collective power of families through participatory systems change.

Harnessing Parent and Caregiver's Individual Power

Parents and caregivers are often the most important people in a child's life. They offer love, acceptance, appreciation, encouragement, and guidance, and provide the most intimate context for the nurturing and protection of children. Harnessing the love and power of parents and caregivers in their child's education is a powerful tool that schools can leverage to improve academic outcomes. When schools and districts recognize and support these diverse strengths they are better equipped to engage them in meaningful ways that support the educational success of their children and create a more positive school culture.

One of the most important steps schools and districts can take to leverage the individual power of families is to ensure that educators move away from traditional and hierarchical ways of viewing and thinking of families and move toward participatory systems change. As educators adopt a more equitable approach to thinking about and working with families, practices also begin to shift and learning becomes a two-way process where both parties learn from one another. Practices that schools and districts traditionally adopt become more collaborative, decision-making becomes more shared, and parents/caregivers are uplifted as true leaders in their child's education.

Reflection

Take a moment here to reflect on the ways in which your school and/or district is leveraging the individual power of parents through participatory systems change.

- How might you and your team(s) acknowledge families as partners in their children's education in school/district policies, practices and programs?
- Have you and your team(s) created opportunities for two-way conversations that place equal value on the insights and perspectives that families have about the assets and challenges of their students (i.e. parent-teacher conferences)?
- Have you and your team(s) offered staff and families opportunities to regularly discuss students' individual learning styles, family cultural experiences, strengths, and academic and personal needs? How might you create spaces where families can share information about their learning goals and aspirations?

- How are you and your team(s) informing families about their child's academic progress? Are familes given tools and resources to support their child's learning?

Most family engagement models across the United States focus individual goals for parent engagement - meaning that approaches are aligned with fostering the knowledge, sense of responsibility, and behaviors of individual parents to support their own children's academic achievement. Oftentimes, schools and districts focus on developing the capacity of individual parents to work with their own children to support their academic performance, as defined by standardized test scores or other academic indicators. Focusing on student achievement is an important priority, however schools and districts should also consider how families can contribute to the well-being of the community as a whole.

Harnessing the Collective Power of Parents and Caregivers

It's important to never lose sight of the fact that families and schools are parts of larger systems and communities. Harnessing the collective power of parents and caregivers creates opportunities to improve the structures, systems, policies, and practices in educational systems in which both educators and families operate. When schools and districts begin to shift the power dynamics between families and schools, the rules of engagement begin to transform and parents and caregivers are able to take on new roles as leaders in their communities.

The venn diagram below shows a very basic "Model of Parent Engagement Initiative Goals." As has been stated above, most traditional models work with parents and caregivers to focus on self-efficacy (or self-sufficiency) and student academic outcomes. Equitable collaborative efforts for family and community engagement leverage both the individual and collective civic capacities of parents and caregivers. Schools and districts that invest in the civic capacities of families work with them to support community-wide causes by building a shared responsibility to act in partnership. As experts in their children's native language, culture, community context, and learning needs, parents can play key decision-making, design and implementation roles in educational transformation efforts.[7] Moving into collective and equitable family engagement also requires that parents and caregivers work alongside educators to build a shared vision and goals and highlights the importance of shared responsibility. Lasty, shared responsibility implies the need to build the capacity of educators and families to work together for the wellbeing of the community.

---

[7] Ishimaru, A. (2013). From heroes to organizers: Principals and education organizing in urban school reform. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *49*(1), 3–51.

Model of Parent Engagement Initiative Goals
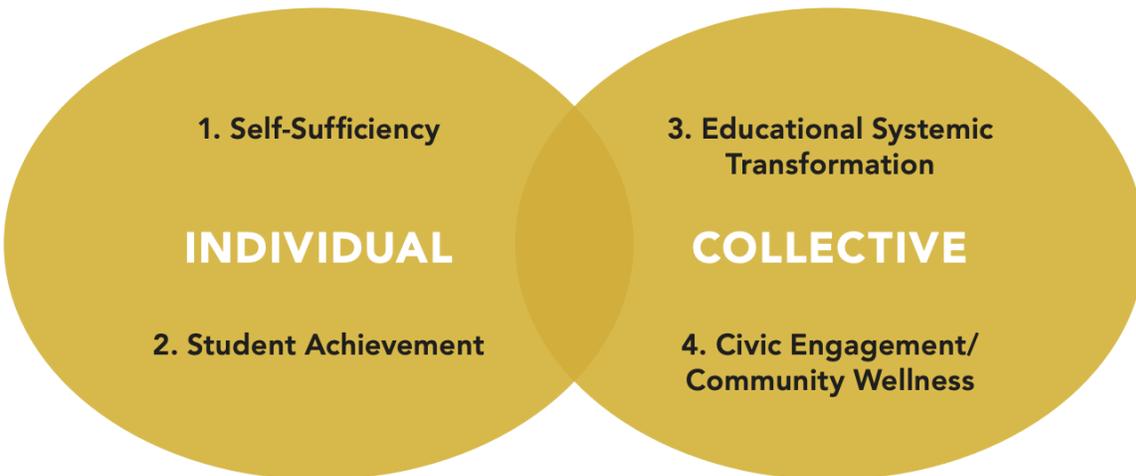
Source: The Road Map Project (2014) *Charting A Course To Equitable Collaboration: Learning From Parent Engagement Initiatives In The Road Map Project*. Retrieved: https://education.uw.edu/sites/default/files/research/projects/epsc/EquitableCollaborationReport_0.pdf

Collective collaboration strategies seek to change the structures, systems, policies and practices in educational systems, particularly those that exclude or marginalize nondominant families and students. Districts and schools that adopt these strategies require a shift in the balances of power and a true commitment for families to have a real influence in educational systems. Schools and districts can make progress toward collective civic capacity building by:

- Building Systemic Capacity: Schools and districts often have to build infrastructure, systems and capacity to support families. This can include hiring dedicated human resources, professional development for educators and building partnership with community-based organizations to remove barriers to parent participation in capacity building efforts (i.e. childcare, transportation, community meetings spaces, etc.)
- Parent Leadership Development: For families from marginalized communities who are navigating the educational system, it is especially important to walk alongside them to build their leadership skills and provide pathways for their engagement as leaders in the school and district. Examples from schools and districts include Parent Leadership Academies that build families' skills to understand and advocate for their students to Parent Advisory Teams that help guide parent engagement strategies and school-wide initiatives.

Reflection

Take a moment here to reflect on the ways in which your school and/or district is leveraging the collective power of parents through participatory systems change.

- Do you and your team(s) offer parent leadership programs, opportunities for families to develop their skills as leaders? Are families honored and respected by school and district leadership as leaders themselves?
- Are you and your team(s) building the capacity of families to inform and lead the development of Local Control Accountability Plans and to join School Site Councils?
- Do you and your team(s) create spaces where families can meet one another, learn about each other, and build relationships to build social capital and connections to communities that can support their children's learning and development?
- Do families and community members co-facilitate family and community oriented workshops at your school or district?
- Do families and staff jointly develop programs for recruitment and support, resulting in active participation of families representing the school site student subgroups in councils and committees at your school or district?

School Site Councils (SSCs) are ideal spaces for parents to join, take on leadership roles, and inform the development of the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) and oversee how the school is utilizing its budget in alignment with the SPSA. Many families, however, do not have sufficient resources or an understanding of SSCs nor the support to fully take on those roles. Similarly, districts are required to involve families in the development of their Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) and few are investing in developing the capacities of families to meaningfully participate as co-educators in the process.

Reflection:
Several models of family engagement are listed in Lesson 4 that develop both the individual and collective capacities of families. Think of the last three family engagement activities led by your district or campus. How were the individual capacities of families developed? How can your district or campus move toward a more comprehensive, collective engagement strategy that leads to stronger outcomes for the entire school community?

Community Engagement Initiative 2.0
Walking Alongside Communities: Building Authentic Community Partnerships
MAYA/FIS COLLABORATIVE WORKSPACE

Module Outline

Section 2	Shifting Mindsets: including community partners in the conversation
Outline	1. Why community partnerships are important 2. Where are we as a school community to reconsider our relationship with community partners? How can we reimagine our relationships with community partners?

Shifting Mindsets: Moving from Community Engagement to Ownership

As has been noted in the modules and lessons above, community partnerships are foundational to the success of students, families, and schools. Partner organizations, community leaders, and elected officials can provide a vast range of additional support, services, and opportunities for students, families, and educators. Moreover, engaging community partners provides a strong platform for creating a shared sense of responsibility for the success of students and schools. Community partners include residents, voters and nonvoters, in the surrounding areas, nonprofits and community-based organizations that work in partnership or around schools, and the broader community (e.g., elected officials, business, foundations, etc.) who may interact with the school and district system.[8]

Just as there are various entities that comprise community partners, there are various approaches schools and districts take to engage them. For this lesson, we assert that community engagement requires more than partnerships with organizations. When schools and districts truly engage and partner with communities, they create spaces for communities to be honored and heard, shift power, and defer to the community as experts. They move away from "planning for" and move toward "planning with" communities.

In 2023, the Community Engagement Initiative commissioned the development of a Community Engagement Best Practices Self Assessment Tool to build the capacity of school districts to facilitate meaningful engagement that outlines a series of competencies that fall under the seven domains described in the table linked in Module 7, Section 2. In this section, we will do a deep dive into Domain 7: Community as Collaborators.

---

[8]Estrada Darley Miller Group (2023) *CEI Community Engagement Best Practices Self Assessment Tool. Retrieved*
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qjMTW2BbzKbP6kgDPmR1DNKdXUfgoPHQrQMNoVVsY04/edit?usp=sharing

CEI Community Engagement Reflection Tool - Domain 7[9]

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">

Domain 7: COMMUNITY AS COLLABORATORS

Foundational Belief: Community and community partners are an essential element of school district change work. When the community is at the table alongside district leaders co-producing a vision for students, they help build investment for systemic change and expands access to resources for students.

The group, "community members" is inclusive of families and students – who are constituents with direct and daily engagement with schools and districts. However, the community also involves individuals and organizations that don't fit into the traditional parent-child/student-school relationship. This includes residents, voters and nonvoters, in the surrounding areas, nonprofits and community-based organizations that work in partnership or around schools, and the broader community (e.g., elected officials, business, foundations, etc.). This domain provides strategies for integrating resources and sparking engagement and collaboration with the broader community that is inclusive of all the stakeholders listed here above. This is not intended to replace the strong community-partnerships approaches outlined in community schools models. Alternatively, this domain provides a review of strategies that can fit into any school and/or district –whether it implements a community school model or not – as it assesses its approach to collaborating with the community.

Impact: Community partnerships are an important component of student and school success. Schools and districts are stronger when they bring together community partners alongside educators, parents, and students to act as decision makers.[10] Research also shows that when schools and districts adopt a community-centered model where community resources (academics, health and social services, youth and community development, early learning and care, and expanded learning) are integrated into school sites alongside community engagement, this leads to improved student learning and stronger communities.[11]

</td></tr>
<tr><td>

Competencies

</td><td>

Advanced Implementation

</td></tr>
<tr><td>

7.1 Integrate resources and services from the community into schools

</td><td>

There is a designated point person, district wide team, or a team at each school site that coordinates all community partnership programming and evaluation. The partnerships are culturally responsive, serve a clear purpose for students, and are deeply integrated into district planning structures.

</td></tr>
<tr><td>

7.2 Convenes and aligns ecosystem of community partners

</td><td>

The district and school sites play a central role in convening and aligning their neighborhood or the broader ecosystem of community partners behind multi-year and annual district plans aligned to school and district continuous improvement efforts.

</td></tr>
<tr><td>

7.3 Schools are seen as neighborhood hubs (i.e. deliver a range of services beyond education in order to prepare their students to learn and to assist families) and there is a high degree of trust between the community and the district

</td><td>

School staff and community members have strong, cross-cultural networks built on trust and respect that increase their capacity to support students' development and school system operations.

</td></tr>
<tr><td>

7.4 The district regularly collects, makes use of, and shares data on the impact of community partnerships

</td><td>

The district collects, makes use of, and shares data from families and community partners about the assets that

</td></tr>
</table>

[9] Ibid

[10] Maier, A et al. Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence. (2017).

[11] Blank, M., Jacobson, R., & Melaville, A. Achieving results through community school partnerships: How district and community leaders are building effective, sustainable relationships. (2012).

	exist in the community and discusses with them how community resources can help meet the academic, social-emotional, health, and financial needs of students and families. This process takes place annually.
7.5 Strong multi-directional channels of community engagement	There are strong community networks across the district that provide community members with multiple entry points to engage with the district. This includes community organizing groups that operate independently of the district and formal district channels (school site councils, regular district community convenings). These are open and effective channels for community members to engage in decision-making.

Assessing Your Community Engagement Efforts

The CEI Community Engagement Self-Assessment Tool allows schools and districts to identify where they are on a spectrum in each domain categorized by stages that go from "not evident" to "advanced." Each stage demonstrates a trajectory of community engagement goals and describes the implied messages sent to communities in each stage (see table below). It is a powerful tool to acknowledge marginalization of communities, especially low-income communities and communities of color. The assessment also asserts a clear vision for reimaging what engagement can look like through inclusion and equity practices. Most importantly, it helps schools and districts assess their progress toward goals.

NOT EVIDENT	DEVELOPING	MATURING	ADVANCED
Ignored, marginalized, dismissed, excluded, tokenized	*Informed, consulted*	*Involved, engaged*	*Partnered with, developed as leaders, empowered, involved in co-creation, shared power*

It is important to note that there are many historical and contextual factors contributing to where schools and districts find themselves on the community engagement trajectory. It is also important to move away from shame, or blame, as we commit to working toward community ownership models. All communities, regardless of their privilege and status are part of a larger ecosystem that either promotes or oppressesses genuine community engagement and ownership. The challenge for educators and communities is to reimagine and rebuild a collaborative that advances the collective vision of the school community.

Educators and school district administrators have a significant role to play in breaking down barriers to engaging communities. The following reflection questions can be useful for educators to examine in order to move along the Spectrum toward community ownership.

Reflection: Consider the following questions developed by Facilitating Power's Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership in your work with communities:

Marginalization represents the status quo, given current systems have been historically designed to exclude certain populations. If concerted efforts are not made to break-down existing barriers to participation, then by default, marginalization occurs.[12]

- What are the roots of systematic marginalization in your school/district? How is political exclusion related to education in your community?

- How does the legacy of political exclusion based on race and class persist to today? What forms does it currently take in your school/district?

Information is the foundation for taking action towards real solutions to the threats we face. As the saying goes, knowledge is power. If, however, community engagement efforts remain at the level of one-way information sharing, such efforts result in placation.

- What does information flow look like for communities in your school/district? What is contributing to information flow? What is hindering it?

- Reflecting on existing community assets, what will it take for communities to have equitable access to information about the issues that directly impact them?

The most common form of 'community engagement' among mainstream institutions is consultation, usually in the form of semi-interactive meetings in which members of the community have the chance to offer input into pre-baked plans.

- When is it appropriate for communities to be in a consultation role? What should communities in your school/district be consulted on?

- Where, in your experience of community engagement does it feel like consultation can be a trap?

- What is needed to move beyond consultation and get to solutions that benefit from the genuine involvement of impacted communities?

Community organizing and power building is needed to bring community engagement out of tokenization and into true involvement of impacted residents in the decisions that impact them.

- What does it take for residents of impacted communities in your school/district to have a real voice in the decision-making that impacts them? What are the examples?

- What is needed to build sustained voice & power?

---

[12] Movement Strategy Center (20XY) The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership. Retrieved: https://movementstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/The-Spectrum-of-Community-Engagement-to-Ownership.pdf

As a culture of systems change develops through community organizing, advocacy, and relationship-building, the limits of local systems to carry out changes on their own becomes apparent. At this point, the opportunity to collaborate across sectors emerges and makes culture shift possible.

- What community-based organizations are building an informed base of resident leaders with the capacity to advocate on behalf of the needs and interests of the community?

- Where are the opportunities for meaningful collaboration between communities & schools/districts to co-develop solutions?

- To what extent have impacted communities built an informed base of community members with the power and influence to achieve policy & systems change?

- What culture shift and system changes are needed for authentic collaboration between schools/districts and communities?

We are building to community ownership to ensure communities have a direct say over what is needed to survive and thrive.

- What role will community ownership play in closing equity gaps?

- What is your collective vision for local community ownership?

- What can you be doing now to lay the groundwork for community ownership?

- What infrastructure for community ownership is needed that you can start building now?