New Visions for Public Schools

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SYSTEM DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Research has consistently shown that community and family engagement has positive impacts on students' academic achievement through high school.[1] Family engagement, in particular, has been linked with higher graduation rates, higher test scores, and greater likelihood to enroll in higher education.[2] Furthermore, some research has suggested that student's academic performance is more influenced by family involvement in students' education than by any other factor, including socioeconomic status.[3]

Schools often struggle to engage families and community, and there is growing evidence that high need urban secondary schools, in particular, struggle in this area.[4] Often, despite the desire to engage community, efforts are fragmented and disparate, without a cohesive strategy. There is frequently a lack of clarity around the various school actors who should be tasked with executing a strategy. Senior researcher at RMC Associate, Kate Gill Kressley, describes this landscape as "random acts of family involvement."[5]

Goal of system
To design and implement intentionally designed activities that promote the development of relationships between students, families, and the greater school community.
I. Articulating the vision for community engagement
System Quality Statements
The school leader defines community engagement, articulates the vision for what this looks like at the school and the expectations for how faculty and staff will enact this vision.
For school staff:
1. The **interview protocol** includes an **explicit description of the NVCHS approach to community engagement.** Additionally, the school has developed a pre-determined set of questions designed to determine a candidate's fit for the school. 2. Upon hiring, the **onboarding team** articulates **the expectations** for faculty in fostering a culture that promotes student, family, and community engagement. This includes a description of Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) and an articulation of the expectations for using this approach to develop a unit of study.

[1] Jeynes, W. (2012). A meta-analysis of the efficacy of different types of parental involvement programs for urban students. *Urban Education, 47*(4), 706-742; Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement. Annual Synthesis 2002. *National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools*.

[2] Deslandes & Bertrand 2005

[3] Hawes and Plourde 2005; Henderson and Berla 1994

[4] (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Bryk & Schneider 2002; Epstein & Sanders 2006, Olivos 2012). http://vue.annenberginstitute.org/issues/36/why-community-engagement#sthash.JXkGrWgy.dpuf

[5] http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/beyond-random-acts-family-school-and-community-engagement-as-an-integral-part-of-education-reform

3. The onboarding process includes the opportunity for school staff to familiarize themselves to the surrounding community and to explore available resources. [This could include inviting staff from local community-based organizations to talk with staff about potential challenge-based learning ideas.]

For students:

1. The school articulates and documents expectations for student engagement, in terms of both academic performance and behavior, in Student and Family Handbook.
2. Upon acceptance of new students, the school provides a range of community-wide events for students, school faculty & staff to interact.
3. The school offers a summer bridge program for newly admitted students that supports their transition into the school community. To determine which students to enroll in this program, the school has **documented criteria**, which include thresholds for all quantitative criteria (attendance history, 8th grade ELA & Math test scores, etc.)
4. This criteria is also used to **identify the families** who might benefit from more intensive support in preparing their child(ren) for their transition into high school.

For families:

1. The school articulates and documents expectations for family engagement in Student and Family Handbook.
2. Upon acceptance of new students, the school provides a range of community-wide events for families, school faculty & staff to interact.
3. The school leader, social worker, and other appropriate staff conducts home visits (or an agreed upon equivalent) for families of newly admitted students. To determine which families to visit, the school has documented criteria, some of which may overlap with the criteria used to determine student enrollment in the Summer Bridge Program.
4. The school leads workshops/information sessions leading up to the start of the school year that cover expectations for student academic performance and behavior.

For community partners:

1. The school articulates the vision for community engagement with various community leaders. This includes a description of successful community partnerships.
2. The school provides opportunities for community partners to meet with faculty.

II. Establishing the infrastructure to enact the academic component of community engagement

Designing & implementing a unit of study using Challenge-Based Learning

<u>CBL</u>

1. The school has a dedicated team to support the development of CBL units that consists of:
    - A member of the school leadership,
    - Faculty members who have effectively designed and implemented a CBL unit in previous years
    - Teachers understand their role in outreach
2. The school defines what constitutes an appropriate community engagement-based challenge.

3. The school establishes a **timeline for each trimester** that clearly marks when key tasks must be completed. Key tasks might include, but are not limited to:
    - Reaching out to families to identify resources within immediate school community
    - Creating a CBL unit plan that is explicitly linked to the appropriate learning standards and that details how community engagement activities are integrated into the unit
    - Contacting potential community partners and scheduling the CE event
    - Entering the CE event in the gradebook
    - Completing items on the CE checklist
4. The CBL team oversees the **curation and maintenance of a centralized directory of community partners & family resources** that contains up to date contact information and the names of specific people with whom the school has an existing relationship
5. The CBL team maintains a **master CBL list** that details:
    - The teachers who will be designing and implementing a CBL unit of study
    - The content area that they teach and the specific unit of study that will be CBL-aligned
    - The trimester the CBL unit will take place
    - A brief description of what the challenge for the unit will be
    - Potential area(s) of support that teachers might require
    - Potential community partners with whom teachers intend on collaborating
6. The CBL team **supports teachers** in the design and planning of the CBL unit of study. This involves:
    - Facilitating collaboration between teachers
    - Reviewing the master CBL list (as described above) periodically
    - Working with lead faculty member to coordinate community partner outreach, facilitate faculty collaboration, and support new teachers as necessary
    - Reviewing the CBL unit plans with the appropriate teachers
7. The school leadership builds in common planning time for teachers and their collaborators. Additionally, the school leadership will ensure that the teaching schedule allows for either off-site or on-site community engagement experiences.
8. School leadership allocates a portion of the school budget for professional development that supports challenge-based learning (CBL) and for any expenses required for carrying out CBL activities (eg, fees, material costs)..

Tracking student engagement:

1. The school has documented criteria, which include thresholds for quantitative criteria (marking period grades, Regents exam scores, daily attendance), that is used to identify students who are exhibiting problematic attendance, behavior, and/or academic performance.
2. The school has communication structures and processes that make it possible for the leadership and staff to discuss, plan, and coordinate necessary interventions.

Evaluating the effectiveness of a CBL unit of study

9. The school articulates how student engagement in community partner-led events is to be documented and measured. Faculty leading CBL units are responsible for developing the appropriate tool for capturing student feedback.
10. Any teacher leading a CBL unit is responsible for entering in the date and the name of the CE event into the gradebook and will record student attendance at every community engagement event in the school's gradebook system.
11. The effectiveness of the CBL unit in covering the content standards will be measured against a pre-determined evaluative framework.

Family engagement:

1. The school establishes communication structures and processes that allow staff and families to share information relevant to the community.
2. The school develops a communication mechanism that connects the PTA to school leadership.
3. The school establishes family outreach protocols to be followed for the ladder of interventions, as detailed above.