



Families as Partners in Education

When parents are involved with their children's education, we all win - especially the children! The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) ensures that the rights of parents are legally protected and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires each local education agency to jointly develop with parents and family members a written parent and family engagement policy (ESSA, 2018). Outreach to families is obligatory under ESSA and programs must be implemented for effective family involvement to improve student outcomes. School divisions in Virginia are challenged to engage families as partners in education and it is time to meet this challenge with positive and sustainable effort. In an interview with Karen Mapp, former consultant to the U.S. Department of Education and now senior lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, she notes that years of research provides evidence that regardless of demographics, students are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, attend school regularly, have better social skills, graduate, and go on to postsecondary education when schools and families partner (Stringer, 2018).

Get **READY** to Engage Families as Parents

The *Getting Ready* model (Marvin, Moen, Knocke, & Sheridan, 2019) is one approach for school systems to explore as they set goals for family engagement. It is a research-based practice for program design. During the past decade, the effectiveness of the *Getting Ready* model has been investigated in a series of studies with children birth to kindergarten, for English and Spanish speaking families, who are enrolled in early childhood education programs. The activities are grounded in positive, ongoing, and goal-oriented relationships with families. The researchers have used the results from randomly controlled trial studies to refine the strategies that lead to positive parent and child outcomes. There are eight strategies that have been found to collectively promote children's learning and development. The first four strategies focus on building trusting and respectful relationships, while the next four strategies promote and reflect a relationship that respects the need for input and feedback from both parents and professionals.

Getting Ready Strategies

1. Communicate openly and clearly
2. Encourage parent - child interactions
3. Affirm parent competencies
4. Make mutual joint decisions
5. Focus parent's attention
6. Use observation and data to explain child's development
7. Share developmental information and resources
8. Model, suggest, and practice

GET **SET** to Engage Families as Partners

As school teams form, with the support of school and community leaders, specific goals may be set for strengthening family and professional partnerships.

[Aligning and Integrating Family Engagement in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports \(PBIS\): Concepts and Strategies for Families and Schools in Key Contexts](#)

This e-book from the Technical Assistance Center for PBIS outlines the critical role family engagement plays in PBIS and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support and describes effective strategies for ensuring family engagement is a natural part of Pre-K through twelfth grade systems.

Teachers and Parents as Partners (TAPP)

TAPP is a research-based model from Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Family, and Schools. TAPP guides parents and teachers through a process to solve student's academic and behavioral challenges across both school and home by:

- Identifying and prioritizing a student's learning and behavioral needs
- Selecting goals and strategies to be used cooperatively at home and school
- Implementing a joint plan at home and school
- Evaluating the plan and monitoring the student's progress

TAPP's work to partner school and family provides significant benefits to teachers, parents, and most importantly, children and youth.

National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI)

Elizabeth Steed and Glen Dunlap, with the NCPMI Family Engagement Workgroup, remind us that building a relationship with families is at the foundation for effective communication. Although developed for early childhood, the strategies offered by Steed & Dunlap are effective across age and grade levels. Having a variety of strategies and practices to communicate with families, offering choices, and asking/listening to what families need is essential to building partnerships throughout the school years.

GO to the Following Resources to Find More information to Engage Families

The Virginia Department of Education's I'm Determined Project has created an eight-part series, *Parent Path to Success* which offer viewers short videos that address self-determination and discuss the benefits of engaging students in community, school, and home activities. Each of these videos is in locations that are social environments where students can practice behaviors associated with self-determined action. Families play an instrumental role and support students to be the best versions of themselves by setting high expectations, assisting with barriers, and planning for the future. This series is a great tool for parents, but can also be a discussion starter for families. Viewers may access the resources attached to each video to explore more about self-determination. This is a great entry point for learning about the I'm Determined project and the resources that are available at imdetermined.org. Teachers may also contact their regional T/TAC coordinators.

[The Virginia Family Special Education Connection](#) provides a one-stop-shop for parents, families, and caregivers of children with special needs. It provides information on disabilities, laws and regulations, videos and webinars, as well as other disability related topics. The site may help families:

- Access local school system contacts and disability services in their community
- Explore an abundance of resources, including assistive technology and behavioral supports to help their child(ren) succeed
- Learn about and plan their child's educational program
- Understand legal rights and responsibilities

As stated on the Web site, “Parents and families can and do make a difference in their [child’s education](#)”

References

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This news brief is a collaborative effort of the Virginia Department of Education Training and Technical Assistance Centers at George Mason University and James Madison University. This issue was prepared by the staff at the VDOE TTAC at James Madison University. For questions about content, please contact [Cathy Cook](#), [Jen MacRae](#), or [Cheryl Henderson](#).

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