

Family Engagement is one of the ten components represented in the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model. Family engagement has a significant positive impact on academic outcomes (grades, standardized test scores, teacher ratings, and indices of academic behaviors and attitudes). Family involvement improves mental and physical health for students, increases higher student and teacher attendance, reduces suspensions, improves school climate, improves social behavior and healthy youth development and reduces substance abuse, teen pregnancy, violence and street crime.



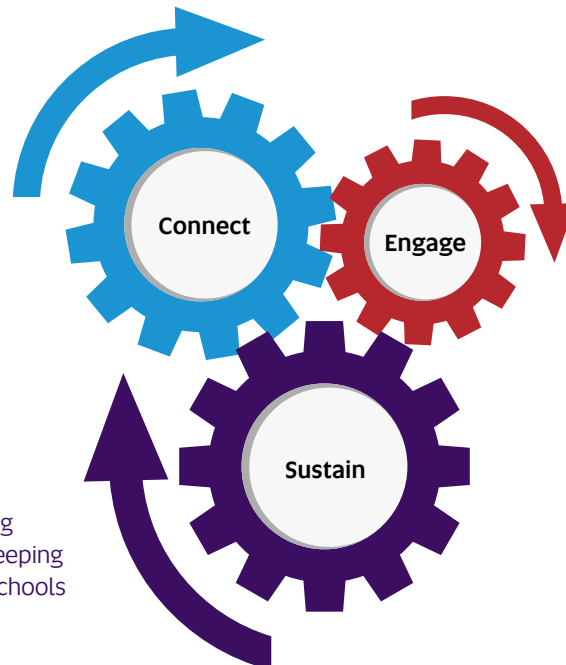
Family members and school staff work together to support and improve the learning, development, and health of students. Family engagement with schools is a shared responsibility of both school staff and family members. School staff is committed to making family members feel welcome, engaging family members in a variety of meaningful ways, and sustaining family engagement. Family members are committed to actively supporting their child's learning and development. This relationship between school staff and family members cuts across and reinforces student health and learning in multiple settings—at home, in school, in out-of-school programs, and in the community. Family engagement should be continuous across a child's life and requires an ongoing commitment as children mature into young adulthood.

~ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention describes three aspects of parent engagement in the 2012 document, "*Parent Engagement Strategies for Involving Family Members in School Health*."

Schools must **connect** family members by building positive relationships to increase engagement.

By identifying and addressing challenges to getting and keeping family members engaged, schools can **sustain** engagement.



Schools can **engage** family members by:

- 1) Providing parenting support
- 2) Communicating with family members
- 3) Providing a variety of volunteer opportunities
- 4) Supporting learning at home
- 5) Encouraging family members to be part of decision making in schools
- 6) Collaborating with the community

*A whole child approach, which ensures each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged, sets the standard for comprehensive, sustainable school improvement and provides for long-term student success.*

# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Ways the **WHOLE SCHOOL, WHOLE COMMUNITY, WHOLE CHILD** components can support family engagement in your school

## 1 HEALTH EDUCATION

- Integrate opportunities into the curriculum for family members and students to discuss health and wellness topics
- Ask family members to help review and select health education curriculum and materials
- Invite family members with health expertise into the classroom to compliment topics related to the health education curriculum

## 2 PHYSICAL EDUCATION & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- Teach activities and games that students can do at home with family members
- Encourage students to develop physical activity goals, and practice the physical education skills they learn in school, with their family members
- Engage family members in implementing active recess activities for students

## 3 NUTRITION ENVIRONMENT & SERVICES

- Invite students and family members to taste test and select breakfast and lunch menu items
- Educate family members about healthy snacks and lunches that can be prepared at home
- Invite family members to take part in the development of healthy eating policy related to celebrations, rewards, and fundraisers

## 4 HEALTH SERVICES

- Provide educational materials to family members on the importance of healthy eating, teeth brushing, hand washing, and general self-care to a healthy lifestyle
- Team up with local providers to offer annual flu shots or screenings for students and family members
- Partner to operate a school or community-based health center for students, staff, and family members

## 5 COUNSELING, PSYCHOLOGICAL & SOCIAL SERVICES

- Educate family members about mental and emotional health issues and warning signs
- Provide a list of community providers that offer counseling services for youth and family members

## 6 SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL CLIMATE

- Create a friendly, welcoming environment for family members
- Collect information from family members about their cultures and traditions
- Establish volunteer programs for family members to serve as role models, assist in classrooms, and monitor recess, drop off/pickup zones, and the lunchroom

## 7 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Invite family members to participate in efforts that support healthy behaviors such as physical activity, healthy eating, and tobacco prevention
- Make indoor and outdoor school facilities available for family member and/or community use outside of school hours

## 8 EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

- Invite family and community members to participate in staff wellness activities
- Recruit family members and/or local experts to assist with staff wellness programs (guest speakers, fitness breaks, registration, etc.)

## 9 FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- Invite family members to be a part of the school's decision-making process related to health and wellness initiatives
- Incorporate health and wellness into family oriented events such as Open House and Family Fun Nights
- Develop a formal process to recruit, train, and involve family members as volunteers to enrich school health and safety programs

## 10 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Partner with community experts to provide educational programs for family members
- Partner with local organizations to offer discounts on health related equipment and/or activities to family members

# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

## Maintaining Administrator Support for Family Engagement in the School



Utilize various methods to communicate with family members (newsletters, student handbook, social media, school web page, email, etc.) about policies, practices, procedures, and programs that impact the health and wellness of students and families



Encourage teachers and staff to ask family members to volunteer for school health and wellness initiatives and programs



Identify challenges and address barriers that keep family members from being connected and engaged in school health activities. For example, provide child care or transportation so family members can attend school meetings or events



Celebrate and acknowledge family members who are engaged and/or volunteer

## Ways to Engage Students

- Send home a monthly physical activity calendar that includes a short bout of physical activity or game for the whole family to participate in each day. Activities can be done during a break from homework or just for fun! ([SHAPE America, Physical Activity Calendars](http://tinyurl.com/pdurhse)): <http://tinyurl.com/pdurhse>
- Provide opportunities for students and family members to share aspects of their culture and traditions that impact the student health and school health environment
- Promote positive health behaviors rather than judge unhealthy behaviors students may see at home (e.g., tobacco use, unhealthy eating, excessive drinking, etc.). Teach students to communicate with family members about their concern



- ✓ Don't try to take on everything at once!
- ✓ The focus of the School Health Improvement Plan should be on the health needs/highest priorities identified through the assessment (School Health Index or Smart Source).
- ✓ Get input from other individuals in your school on how to best address family engagement.
- ✓ Meet regularly with your school health team and monitor School Health Improvement Plan implementation progress.
- ✓ A final consideration: If you shared the School Health Improvement Plan with someone unfamiliar with it, would they understand the purpose, SMART objective, and action steps necessary to achieve the objective? Would they understand what the school health team is trying to accomplish? If not, add more details!

## Writing a SMART School Health Improvement Plan (SHIP)

### Sample SMART Objective

By May 15, 20XX, grade level teams at Great Plains Elementary School will assign students at least four activities per month to engage family members in learning at home.

By May 15, 20XX, Sky Drive Middle School will write a blog focused on parenting education and strategies to be sent home monthly to family members.



## SMARTness

To ensure your SHIP is SMART, be sure it includes:

- A SMART objective based on the priority identified from a school health assessment tool
- Action steps that are clear, complete, and in chronological order
- Action steps on data collection, team and grant responsibilities, and sustainability efforts
- A realistic budget aligned with the SMART objective
- Shared responsibility among all team members

For more information on School Health Improvement Plans, refer to the Destination <http://tinyurl.com/orq4pyu>

# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



## Watch D.O.G.S.: Recruit, train, and involve family members as volunteers to enrich school health and safety programs

A program of the National Center for Fathering, WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dad of Great Students) aims to provide positive male role models for students as well as provide extra supervision to enhance safety and reduce bullying in the school. This is just one example of a parent engagement and volunteer program you can use to promote health and wellness in your school. National Center of Fathering, WATCH D.O.G.S Program: <http://www.fathers.com/watchdogs/>

- Create a WATCH D.O.G.S. planning committee and invite staff, fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and/or other father figures to join
- Determine the roles and responsibilities needed to run the program such as purchasing supplies; maintaining budget; communicating with school staff, family members and community about the program; coordinating volunteer schedule; documenting and tracking progress; taking pictures; and sharing successes with others
- Survey teachers, staff and administrators to help determine what volunteers will do while in the school
- Work with committee members to determine program logistics
- Solicit program donations from local organizations and businesses or work with administrators to secure funding for the program
- Organize and hold a training for volunteers
- Develop a volunteer schedule
- Check in with volunteers regularly to find out what is working and what can be improved
- Conduct an end of year program evaluation
- Celebrate your volunteers throughout and at the end of the school year
- Share progress and outcomes of the WATCH D.O.G.S program with the school community

## Parents are the Power!

Actively solicit parent involvement and engage community resources and services to respond more effectively to the health-related needs of students. Encourage parents to become active members of your school health and wellness team. Encourage parents to advocate for healthy school initiatives through active membership on school accountability committees, district wellness advisory councils, and community coalitions.

Parents could assist with the development, implementation and support of the following examples of health and wellness initiatives:

- School Breakfast Programs (Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab N' Go, or Breakfast After First Period)
- Healthy Snacks (create guidelines; provide samples; promote healthy snack day/week; work with school stores)
- Nutrition Education (morning announcements; curricula; parent volunteers teach nutrition lessons)
- Non-food Rewards and School Parties (reward with physical activity breaks; school parties that include games and activities; healthy recipe book)
- Fundraising (non-food fundraisers such as flowers, gift wrap or magazine subscriptions; raffle donations from community organizations such as gym memberships, exercise equipment, kitchen tools, healthy food gift baskets)
- Physical Education/Physical Activity (petition the school/administration to include physical education, physical activity and/or recess in local wellness policy)
- Physical Activity (work with schools to ensure implementation of state laws and regulations regarding physical activity, purchase equipment for after-school programs; encourage walk and bike to school programs; parent volunteers teach physical activity breaks in the classroom or lead active recess activities)

## Resources



- [Action for Healthy Kids, Colorado](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/in-your-state/colorado/welcome)  
<http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/in-your-state/colorado/welcome>
- [Colorado Parent Teacher Association](http://copta.org/)  
<http://copta.org/>
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Parents for Healthy Schools](http://tinyurl.com/ormww6a)  
<http://tinyurl.com/ormww6a>
- [National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement](http://nafsce.org/)  
<http://nafsce.org/>