

Key to Climate: How Family Engagement Can Change the Forecast

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Who we are...

Formed Families Forward's **mission** is to improve developmental, educational, social, emotional and post-secondary outcomes for **children and youth with disabilities and other special needs** through provision of information, training and support to adoptive and foster parents, and kinship caregivers. We provide:

- In-person trainings and Webinars
- Fact sheets and other resources
- Youth/YA peer support group; parent/caregiver support group
- Direct support- calls and meetings
- Connecting families to resources
- FFF is family partner to Va Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS)

Family, Youth & Community

Why include youth, family and community?

- Students have higher math and reading achievement when schools engage parents and caregivers.
- Children of school-engaged parents and caregivers have higher academic & social skills and lower aggressive behaviors.
- Empowering families in school leadership matters!

But this is not easy!



Involvement or Engagement

Holding a fall back-to-school open house where parents/caregivers follow their student's daily schedule and hear about each teacher's expectations and grading policies.

Asking a grandfather of a student in the school to mow the back baseball field weekly.

Recruiting a mother of a student to participate regularly on the schoolwide PBIS team; when she cannot attend, she Skypes in.

Inviting 3 dads and moms to serve on a math textbook selection committee; their votes are considered equally with other committee members.

Involvement or Engagement, continued

Allowing the PTA or PTO to set up a school store at lunch to raise money to buy equipment for the PE department.

Releasing a youth from a study hall period to participate regularly in a division level committee about revising high school discipline policies.

A principal and a parent co-teaching an evening session for families on homework strategies.

The Sunshine committee of the PTSA plans a teacher appreciation week lunch for all staff.

Staff collects donations of canned goods before the holidays and distributes to school families in financial need.

What's Involvement and Engagement (Ferlazzo, 2011)

One of the dictionary definitions of involve is "to enfold or envelope," whereas one of the meanings of engage is "to come together and interlock." Thus, involvement implies **doing to**; in contrast, engagement implies **doing with**.

A school striving for family involvement often leads with its mouth—identifying projects, needs, and goals and then telling parents how they can contribute.

A school striving for parent engagement, on the other hand, tends to lead with its ears—listening to what parents think, dream, and worry about. The goal of family engagement is not to serve clients but to gain partners.

Involvement and Engagement

It's not that family involvement is bad. Almost all the research says that any kind of increased parent interest and support of students can help.

But almost all the research also says that family engagement can produce even better results—for students, for families, for schools, and for their communities (Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009).

Family involvement and engagement are not mutually exclusive; most schools pursue both.

Involvement and Engagement

Some people see power as a finite pie: If you get more, that means I have less. Our vision of family engagement however, views power in a different way.



As families move from being school clients or volunteers to being leaders in education improvement efforts, they gain more power. As a result, the whole pie gets bigger, and more possibilities are created.

Questions – Is it Involvement or Engagement

Does your school tend toward doing to or doing with families?

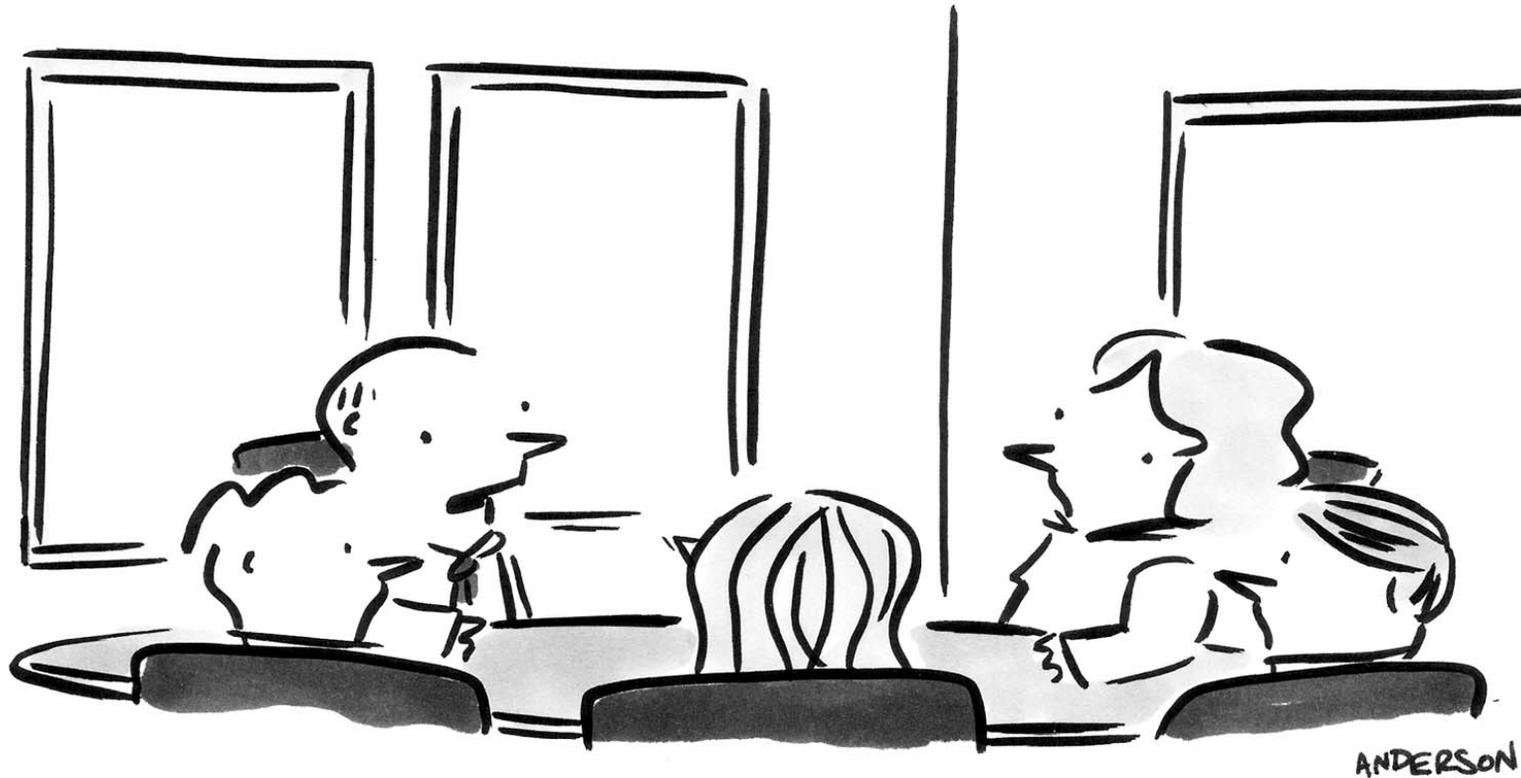
Does the staff do more talking or more listening?

Is the emphasis on one-way communication or on two-way conversation?

Is your school's vision of its community confined to the school grounds, or does this vision encompass the entire neighborhood?

Why is this so HARD?

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"OK, now that we all agree, let's all go back to our desks and discuss why this won't work."

Barriers to MEANINGFUL Family Engagement?



Challenges to Engagement

Resources (time, money)

Attitude/perception

Culture

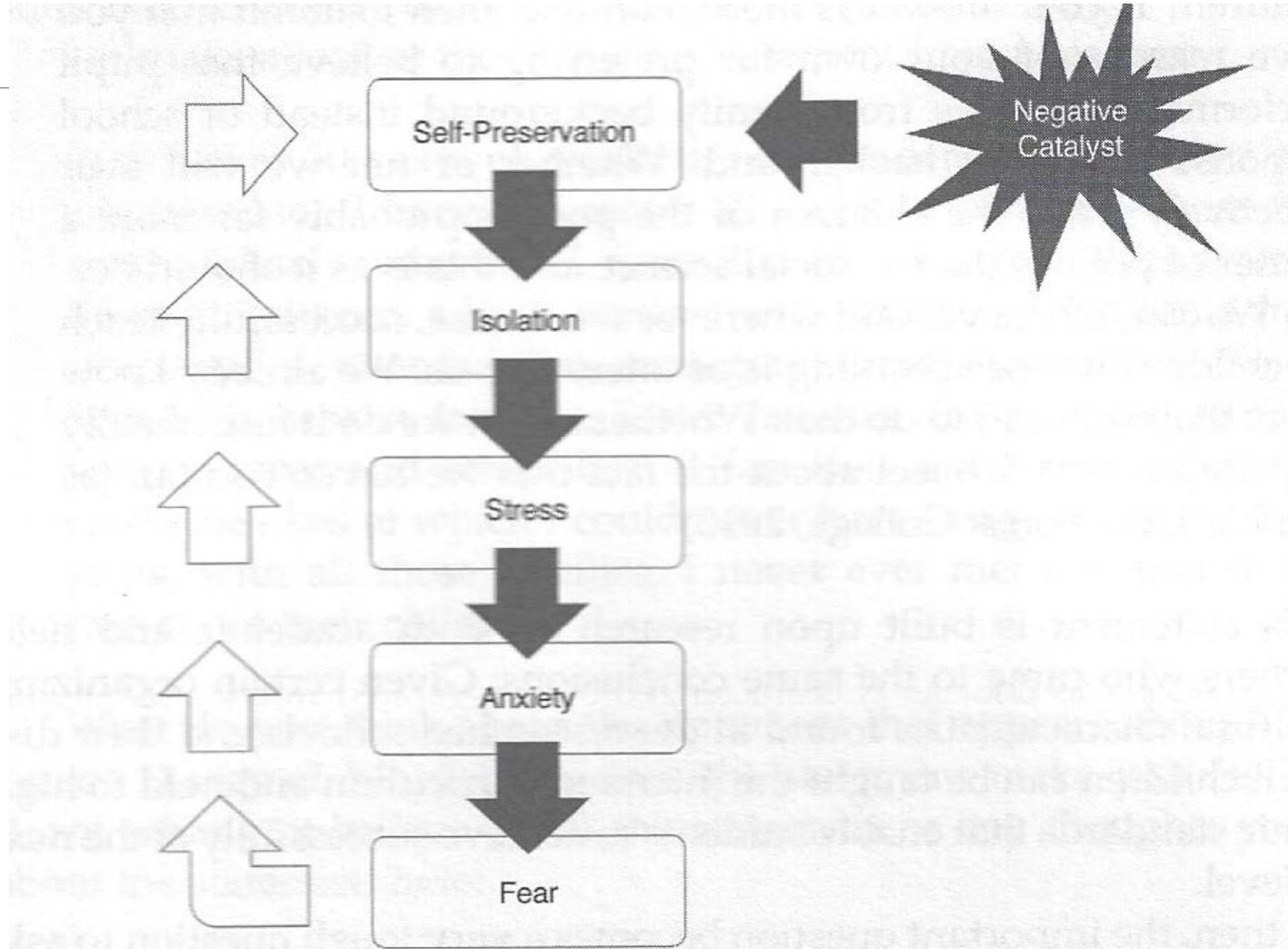
Communication

History

Policies/procedures

Did challenges fall into these general categories? Others?

Cycle of Disengagement (Constantino, 2016)



Cycle of Disengagement

There are a number of circumstances that contribute to a cycle of disengagement.

Consider the phases triggered by negative catalyst:

**Self Preservation, Isolation, Stress,
Anxiety, Fear**

Breaking the Cycle

Ideas, objectives, initiatives, and strategies that requires a shift in thinking will drift toward the existing culture unless **significant work** is done to augment, expand, and change the culture to embrace the desired change.

Your informed **vision** for family engagement (educator/family collaboration) is key.

Engagement has **behavioral** (things we can observe); **emotional** (interest, value, and feelings toward the school environment); and **cognitive aspects** (effort) aspects.

Family Engagement/Equity connection: Social Emotional Engagement

Not unlike the need for schools to consider the social emotional needs of children and youth, social emotional engagement is critical to working collaboratively with families. Relationships and trust are key.

Families may face chronic and systemic traumas and bring those experiences with them as they try to support their children and youth in school and work with school staff. Trauma-sensitive approaches are a universal approach (good for all, but critical to those who have been impacted).

An “inviting” approach in all family engagement opportunities (in and outside of building, in all communications) should be the culturally relevant.

Family Engagement/Equity Connection: Opportunity to Learn

Some parents/caregivers have not had positive past experiences with schools. Some may not have positive associations with schools and school leaders/authority, and may not have skills for negotiating parent/school communications successfully. What supports are available to share (teach) effective and efficient skills for strengthening positive and constructive home/school communication and problem solving?

Families may need support from schools to understand the implications of course selection for their students. High expectations for all students is key and schools can support families in “visioning” high expectations.

Schools can help identify and make explicit the necessary actions by both family and school to meet high expectations.



Why Families Engage: Three Factors that Matter

(based on work of Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005)

Families believe that through their efforts to become engaged in the school-learning lives of their children they can exercise more **positive outcomes**.

Families believe that the school **values their participation** and the genuine nature of the invitation.

Families' personal perception of their lives – **is it feasible** to be engaged, and the degree to which they believe their own skill, time, and energy is conducive to their engagement.

How? The Joining Process (Henderson, Mapp, et al., 2017)

Welcoming- Develops Relationships

Honoring- Deepens Relationships

Connecting- Links Families to **Student Learning** and Sustains Relationships

How? Research strongly suggests that engaging families can have a significant, sustained and positive impact on student learning, by:

- Building **personal relationships and mutual understanding** with families via class meetings, informal one-on-one conversations, and home visits
 - **Sharing data** with families about student skill levels
 - **Modeling high-impact teaching practices** such as dialogic reading and hands-on math activities so families can use them at home
 - **Listening to families' ideas** about their children's interests and challenges, and **using this input** to differentiate instruction
 - Incorporating content from families' home **cultures** into classroom lessons.
- (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson and Davies, 2007)

Communicate and Build Relationships



There is consistent evidence that effective communication and relationship building creates environments in the schools that are welcoming, respectful, and conducive to family engagement.

An effective school places an emphasis on **effective communication with every family and stakeholder** within the learning community and seeks to build **trusting relationships** with every family.

Policy and Program Goals: FE depends on a Collective Capacity to Engage in Partnership

To build and enhance the capacity of staff AND families in the “4 C” areas:

- Capabilities (skills and knowledge)
- Connections (networks)
- Cognition (beliefs, values)
- Confidence (self-efficacy)



Alignment between Family Engagement, PBIS, CR-PBIS and MTSS

MTSS	Family Engagement	PBIS	CR-PBIS (culturally-responsive PBIS)
Leadership	Leadership	PBIS Team	Family voice and perspective included in teaming
Data Evaluation	Data-based Goals & Outcomes	Evaluation	Including goals regarding equitable outcomes
Communication and Collaboration	Positive Relationships	Faculty Commitment	Emphasis on personal relationships among students, teachers, and families
Capacity Building Infrastructure	Family Empowerment	Implementation Plan	PD includes culture and self-awareness
Multiple Tiers Of Supports	Multi-tiered Approach	Expectations, Rule Lesson Plans/Teaching Rewards. Discipline Procedures Classroom Systems	Stakeholders central to the development of behavioral curriculum
	Collaborative Problem Solving	Data Entry and Analysis	Includes review of disaggregated data

Family Engagement Domains

Leadership- school level leadership (administrators and school leadership team) establish FE as a priority; FE is included in school vision, mission, goals and these are aligned with division vision & goals for FE. PD and ongoing coaching to build capacity for staff and families to work together to support student outcomes.

Data-based Goals & Outcomes- FE goals and outcomes are identified and monitored with data. Based on student outcome data and input from families and staff. Focus on knowledge, skills, practices and actions of staff and families.

Family Engagement Domains, continued

Positive Relationships- Relationships between educators and families are positive, educators recognize families' needs and cultural characteristics, leading to greater understand and respect among all.

Family Empowerment- Educators use effective strategies to identify and encourage families' knowledge, skills and efficacy for supporting students learning. Results in empowered families who serve as leaders, advocates, supports and partners in student learning.

Family Engagement Domains, continued

Multi-tiered Approach- Educators use multidimensional approaches to engage families in dialogue (multiple communication modes). Educators use multi-tiered approaches including tier 1 strategies for all families, more intensive tier 2 and tier 3 approaches for fewer families

Collaborative Problem-Solving- Families of children receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports are effectively engaged in all steps of the problem-solving process

Family Engagement Domains

Where are your strengths?

What is most challenging?

Where can you make “quick fixes”?

Where do you want to make more focused, sustained change?

What is reasonable with resources you have?

What’s the plan to move forward?

A few words... Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS)

... is a **data-informed** decision making framework for establishing the **social culture and academic and behavioral supports** needed for the school to be an **effective** learning environment (for academics, behavior and social-emotional wellbeing) for **all students**.

*A process for continuous improvement,
increase effectiveness AND efficiency*



Adapted from the OSEP Center on PBIS, 2010

In other words...

- The Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS) is a multi-tiered approach for working with students that uses evidence-based practices and progress monitoring to improve student outcomes and wellness.
- VTSS represents an integration and alignment of instruction, interventions and/or initiatives for behavior, academics and mental wellness that are evidence based and culturally appropriate.

NOT...



Components of VTSS

- Multiple tiers of instructional and service delivery
- Use of a problem-solving process to determine what type of instruction and service delivery is needed
- Use of data to determine if the instruction and service delivery is working or needs to be changed.

The VTSS Framework

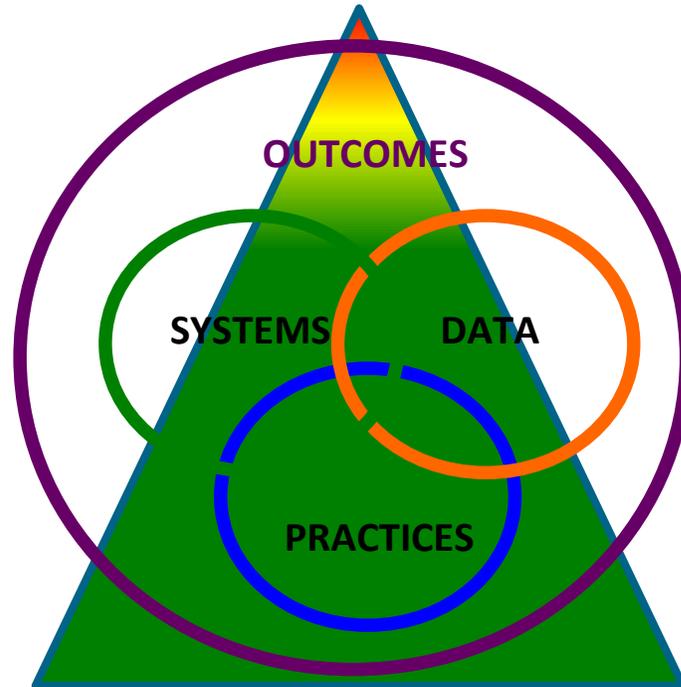
1. Aligned Organizational Structure
2. Data Informed Decision Making
3. Evidence-Based Practices
- 4. Family, School, and Community Partnerships**
5. Monitoring Student Progress
6. Evaluation



Data Based Decision Making

Evidence Based Practices

Family, School and
Community Partnerships



Monitoring Student Progress

Evaluation

Aligned Organizational Structure and Culture

What does this look like?

What does this mean for families?

- Family engagement is not separate from other VTSS efforts!
- Important leverage points for families:
 - **Awareness** of VTSS efforts (ex., how screening & progress monitoring works; what and how tiered supports are implemented; supports at home)
 - **Meaningful participation in VTSS leadership** (ex., Parents and caregivers are equal members of division and school teams called Division Leadership Teams and School Leadership Teams)
 - Participants in ongoing **data-informed decision-making and evaluation**
 - **Support** of ALIGNED systems
 - **Consistent** vision, language, practices

Featured FE efforts may include:

- Family, youth and/or community representation and regular participation on tier 1/VTSS/PBIS teams;
- Formal and informal ongoing and regular communication to families, youth and community members about the VTSS efforts;
- Being purposeful in self-assessing and improving warm and welcoming access for families to school buildings, programs, etc. This might include consideration of trauma-sensitive approaches and settings;
- Sharing information about the continuum of supports available to students and families

Featured efforts, continued:

- Asking families and community members about implementation of VTSS/PBIS; collecting and using data from families, youth and community members;
- Investing in staff position(s) whose primary duties include direct family engagement and representation of family voice in school improvement;
- Engaging family and community members in ongoing school support and improvement, for example, using family members as peer mentors and advocates for other parents;
- Regular and meaningful inclusion of families, youth and community members in collaborative, data-based problem-solving approaches

Consider:

- Does your division have a definition or model for family and community engagement? If so, what are the outcomes and expectations for schools?
- How are outcomes/expectations inclusive of and responsive to family and community culture?
- How do family and community members know how and when to engage?
- What facilitates engagement in your division and school?