BEST PRACTICES IN MEASURING PARENT ENGAGEMENT

In the following report, Hanover Research summarizes the literature on best practices in measuring parent and family engagement.

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INTRODUCTION

Educators consistently agree regarding the importance and value of parent and family engagement in promoting student achievement and building strong schools and communities. However, educators do disagree regarding the *definition* of parent and family engagement,[1] and little scholarly literature suggests specific, measurable objectives or indicators that leaders can use to determine the success of existing parent and family engagement efforts. Given these complications, evaluating parent and family engagement can be a complicated effort at the school and district levels. Leaders face key two questions, namely: "How should we define parent and family engagement?" and, "Using that definition, how can we measure parent and family engagement?"

In the following report, Hanover Research draws on family engagement literature published by education and outreach organizations like the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and state departments of education to help districts address both of these questions. The report proceeds in two sections:

- **Section I: Defining Family Engagement** reviews basic, scholarly definitions of family engagement and involvement (e.g., what educators are trying to measure).
- **Section II: Measuring Family Engagement** reviews common tools, indicators, and metrics that educators can use to assess family engagement and involvement.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Experts define family engagement using several conceptual models, the most well-known of which is the School-Family Partnership model popularized by Joyce Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement**. In Epstein's framework, engagement is composed of activities completed by parents, students, and school staff in six interactive spheres: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community.
- **Conceptual models of family engagement are further informed by family engagement *standards.*** Outreach organizations like the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and state departments of education offer family engagement standards that, much like family engagement models, describe what districts and schools should be doing to foster strong, connected communities of students, teachers, and parents.
- **Regardless of the model, evaluating family engagement should be a systematic and regular process**. This process includes four main phases: preparing for data collection, collecting data, analyzing data, and sharing and using the results of data. Notably, leaders should use the preparation phase as an opportunity to determine what

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[1] Weiss, H. and M. Lopez. "Redefining Family Engagement in Education." Harvard Family Research Project, May 2009. http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/publications-resources/redefining-family-engagement-in-education

engagement model is the best fit for their community, ask questions about existing engagement efforts, and contemplate the engagement needs of their communities.

- **Evaluating family engagement may require districts to analyze existing data and/or collect new data for analysis**. Evaluators can gather existing data from hard-copy sources (e.g., sign-in sheets at parent education workshops) or digital sources (e.g., the number of unique visitors to a parent portal on the district website). To gather new data—particularly qualitative data not easily captured by school data systems, such as the percentage of parents who feel welcome at school sites—evaluators can administer stakeholder surveys or self-assessment questionnaires.

- **Although the literature does not frequently offer specific, measurable indicators that districts can use to track engagement, educators can develop indicators from reviews of qualitative descriptions of family engagement models and standards**. For example, descriptions of Joyce Epstein's second type of involvement ("Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress") and the PTA's second standard ("Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning") suggest that some helpful indicators may include the percentage of school meetings outside school hours that offer subsidized childcare, or the number of key school documents and handbooks available in languages other than English.

SECTION I: DEFINING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

This section reviews basic, scholarly definitions of family engagement and involvement, and profiles Joyce Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement and the National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEFINING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Defining family engagement before measuring family engagement and involvement is important, as stakeholders in the education community often hold distinctly different views on what engagement and involvement actually *mean*.[2] These differences may arise out of cultural and structural differences (e.g., how teachers understand engagement differs from how families want to be engaged),[3] or simple confusion regarding terminology. Exemplifying this confusion, the education community struggles to clarify the distinction between engagement and involvement. Many sources use one or both terms without definition:[4] some, like the ASCD's May 2011 *School, Families, and Communities* issue, define involvement as "doing to" and engagement as "doing with."[5] On the other hand, other groups, such as Families in Schools, define involvement as the actions parents take and engagement as the actions schools take.[6]

Because of these definitional differences, researchers point out that to evaluate family engagement and involvement, educators should first discuss and identify exactly what they aim to evaluate. Doing so helps ensure that "family engagement" policies are coherent and strategic, rather than isolated, random acts designed to meet an unclear or shifting goal.[7] For the purposes of this report, we will use both terms to refer to the dynamic relationships between families, students, and schools. The following sub-section details how experts conceptualize these relationships through a series of engagement and involvement models.

DEFINITIONS OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

The complex relationships between families, students, and schools can be conceptualized through four main models: the school-family partnership model, the parenting practices

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[2] Ibid.

[3] "Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Parents and Community as Partners in Education, Part I." Regional Educational Laboratory, January 2015. p. 3. http://relpacific.mcrel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ToolkitPart1.pdf

[4] Halgunseth, L. et al. "Family Engagement, Diverse Families, and Early Childhood Education Programs: An Integrated Review of the Literature." National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009. p. 6. http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/ecprofessional/EDF_Literature%20Review.pdf
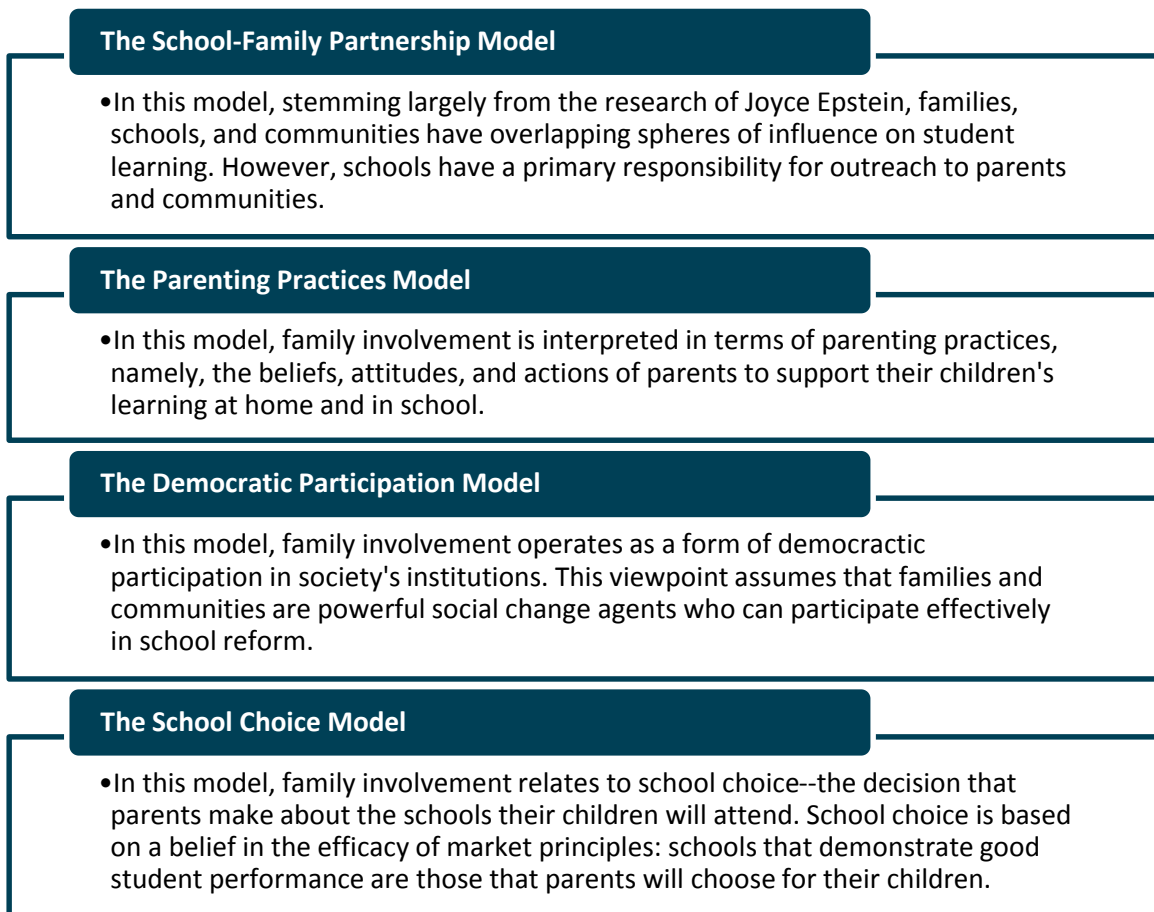
[5] Ferlazzo, L. "Involvement or Engagement?" *Educational Leadership*, 68:8, May 2011. http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may11/vol68/num08/Involvement-or-Engagement%C2%A2.aspx

[6] Freedberg, L. "Report: State Must Adopt Guidelines for Parent Engagement in Schools." EdSource, February 22, 2016. https://edsource.org/2016/report-state-must-adopt-guidelines-for-parent-engagement-in-schools/95124

[7] Westmoreland, H. et al. "Data Collection Instruments for Evaluating Family Involvement." Harvard Family Research Project, 2009. p. 2. http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/publications-resources/data-collection-instruments-for-evaluating-family-involvement

model, the democratic participation model, and the school choice model, which are depicted in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Four Models of Family Engagement

The School-Family Partnership Model

- In this model, stemming largely from the research of Joyce Epstein, families, schools, and communities have overlapping spheres of influence on student learning. However, schools have a primary responsibility for outreach to parents and communities.

The Parenting Practices Model

- In this model, family involvement is interpreted in terms of parenting practices, namely, the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of parents to support their children's learning at home and in school.

The Democratic Participation Model

- In this model, family involvement operates as a form of democractic participation in society's institutions. This viewpoint assumes that families and communities are powerful social change agents who can participate effectively in school reform.

The School Choice Model

- In this model, family involvement relates to school choice--the decision that parents make about the schools their children will attend. School choice is based on a belief in the efficacy of market principles: schools that demonstrate good student performance are those that parents will choose for their children.

Source: Harvard Family Research Project[8]

The school-family partnership model in particular is highly visible in the literature and in standards surrounding family engagement and involvement.[9] Popularized by Joyce Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement, this model presents engagement as an activity that occurs in six interactive spheres: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community. These spheres are outlined in Figure 1.2 on the following page. According to Epstein, implementing activities in all spheres "can help

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[8] "Concepts and Models of Family Involvement." Harvard Family Research Project, May 2002.
http://hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/concepts-and-models-of-family-involvement
[9] See, for example, Davis, D. "Supporting Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in Your School." Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, June 2000. p. 2.
http://www.pacer.org/mpc/pdf/titleipip/SupportingInvolvement_article.pdf

parents become involved at school and at home in various ways that meet student needs and family schedules."[10]

Figure 1.2: The School-Family Partnership Model (Joyce Epstein)

TYPE	DEFINITION	UNDERSTAND…
Parenting	Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.	*"Workshop"* to mean more than a meeting about a topic held at the school building at a particular time. It may also mean making information about a topic available in a variety of forms that can be viewed, heard, or read anywhere, anytime, in varied forms.
Communicating	Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.	*"Communications about school programs and student progress"* to mean two-way, three-way, and many-way channels of communication that connect schools, families, students, and the community.
Volunteering	Recruit and organize parent help and support.	*"Volunteer"* to mean anyone who supports school goals and children's learning or development in any way, at any place, and at any time -- not just during the school day and at the school building.
Learning at Home	Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.	*"Homework"* to mean not only work done alone, but also interactive activities shared with others at home or in the community, linking schoolwork to real life. *"Help"* at home to mean encouraging, listening, reacting, praising, guiding, monitoring, and discussing -- not "teaching" school subjects.
Decision-making	Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.	*"Decision making"* to mean a process of partnership, of shared views and actions toward shared goals, not just a power struggle between conflicting ideas. Parent *"leader"* to mean a real representative, with opportunities and support to hear from and communicate with other families.
Collaborating with Community	Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.	*"Community"* to mean not only the neighborhoods where students' homes and schools are located but also any neighborhoods that influence their learning and development. *"Community"* rated not only by low or high social or economic qualities, but by strengths and talents to support students, families, and schools. *"Community"* means all who are interested in and affected by the quality of education, not just those with children in the schools.

Source: Joyce Epstein[11]

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[10] Epstein, J. and K. Salinas. "Partnership with Families and Communities." *Educational Leadership*, 61:8, May 2004. p. 2. http://mnliteracy.org/sites/default/files/partnering_with_families_and_communities_-_epstein.pdf

[11] Epstein, J. "Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement." UNICEF. pp. 1–6. http://www.unicef.org/lac/Joyce_L._Epstein_s_Framework_of_Six_Types_of_Involvement(2).pdf

STANDARDS FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Educational organizations like the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), as well as several state departments of education, offer standards for family-school engagement. The PTA, a network of educators and families focused on promoting family engagement in schools, has six standards for family-school partnerships, which are outlined below in Figure 1.3. The Georgia PTA, as well as the Georgia Department of Education, also use the PTA national standards.[12] Notably, the national standards reflect much of the content of Epstein's school-family partnership model.

Figure 1.3: National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships

Standard One — Welcoming All Families
- Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

Standard Two — Communicating Effectively
- Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

Standard Three — Supporting Student Success
- Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

Standard Four — Speaking Up for Every Child
- Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

Standard Five — Sharing Power
- Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

Standard Six — Collaborating with Community
- Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

Source: National PTA[13]

The California Department of Education (CDE) offers another example of statewide family engagement standards not directly based on the PTA standards. These "district principles"—

[12] [1] "Parent Involvement/Family Engagement." Georgia PTA, 2012-2013. P. 2. http://www.georgiapta.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Family_Engagement_Resource_Guide.pdf [2] "Parent Engagement Program." Georgia Department of Education. https://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Partnerships/Pages/Parent-Engagement-Program.aspx

[13] Content taken verbatim from "National Standards for Family-School Partnerships." National PTA. http://www.pta.org/nationalstandards

originally called parent involvement standards—provide "a one-page overview of the essential actions for family and community involvement at the district level." The principals are depicted below in Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4: CDE District Principles for Family Engagement

Principle	Principle Items
Build Capacity	Ensure that all principals understand and implement required and effective parental involvement practices at their schools.
	Establish family-friendly volunteer policies to recruit and organize help and support from parents.
	Train parents to successfully participate in curricular and budgetary decision making.
	Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.
	Ensure staff and family access to training in effective school, family, and community partnerships.
	Train staff, with the assistance of parents, in how to reach out to and work with parents as equal partners in their children's education
	Ensure that teachers and families have knowledge and tools to help students with homework and other curriculum-related activities.
Demonstrate Leadership	Ensure that all schools have parent/family involvement programs.
	Meet requirements of state and federal law regarding family involvement.
	Involve families in advisory bodies and training strategies.
Resources: Fiscal and Other	Allocate resources and assign staff to implement the plan.
Monitor Progress	Ensure all schools integrate parental involvement programs into the school's Single Plan for Student Achievement
	Provide oversight, support, and coordination of parent involvement activities among district schools and programs.
	Document progress of each school's implementation of its parent involvement program
	Assess every principal's effectiveness in establishing and maintaining school, family, and community partnerships at his or her school.
Access and Equity	Ensure that critical parent information is readily available in accessible formats and languages spoken by families in the district
	Ensure that parent representation on committees reflects the composition of the student body.
	Ensure that schools have a system in place with multiple strategies to facilitate two-way communication with parents and community members on a regular basis.

Source: CDE[14]

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[14] Content taken verbatim from "Family Engagement Frameworks: A Tool for California School Districts." California Department of Education, 2014. p. 9. http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/pf/documents/famengageframeenglish.pdf

SECTION II: EVALUATING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

This section reviews common processes, tools, and metrics that educators can use to assess family engagement and involvement.

THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Measuring family engagement is ideally a cyclical, systemic process, not an isolated, singular activity. Specifically, districts should approach important self-evaluation initiatives systematically to ensure that the collected data meaningfully contribute to answering the evaluation questions and have a significant chance of being used to impact real change.[15]

In a guide to using data to support family progress, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Head Start organizes this process into four interrelated activities:[16]

- **Prepare**: What do you want to know (about individual children, about families, about program efforts)? How does change happen? What questions will you ask?

- **Collect**: How will you collect the information? Who will you collect it from? When and where? How often? How will you store and retrieve it?

- **Analyze and Aggregate**: How will you analyze the information? Will you aggregate (summarize) the information?

- **Share and Use**: How will you share the information? How will you know what it means? How will you use it to support continuous improvement and change?

Figure 2.1: The Four Data Activities

Source: Office of Head Start[17]

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[15] "Parent and Family Involvement: A Guide to Effective Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in North Carolina Schools." Public Schools of North Carolina. p. 7.
http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/parents/toolkit/guide.pdf

[16] Content taken with minor edits from "Measuring What Matters: Using Data to Support Family Progress." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start. p. 16.

[17] Ibid.

PREPARE

In the "Prepare" stage, district leaders should decide on the definitional framework that best fits their understanding of parent engagement, compile information on their ongoing family engagement efforts, and gather information on family demographics. Collecting information on family engagement efforts (e.g., descriptions of current initiatives, strategies, or programs aimed at increasing family engagement) and family demographics (e.g., what languages parents speak at home, what types of schedules parents keep, how many children parents have below the age of five) helps leaders understand what information would most appropriately track district successes or challenges within the context of a given population. For example, districts with multiple initiatives aimed at increasing the number of single parents in elementary school who can attend school events may want to track different information than districts with initiatives aimed at increasing the number of language-minority parents who feel comfortable contacting teachers and administrators.[18]

COMPILING INFORMATION ON FAMILY DEMOGRAPHICS

To compile data on family demographics, leaders may ask questions such as:[19]

- Is this a school with a high percentage of single-parent homes?
- Is this a school with many English language learners?
- Is this a school with a high mobility rate?
- Are there many families where at least one parent is predominately in the home?
- Is there a high percentage of homes where violence, abuse, addiction, physical or mental illness is present?
- What educational goals do families have for their children?

COMPILING INFORMATION ON ONGOING EFFORTS

Leaders can use visual tools such as logic models to compile detailed information regarding ongoing family engagement efforts. Logic models depict "how your organization does its work" by describing how programmatic assumptions, principles, activities, processes, and outcomes are linked together.[20] When programs are well-defined and publicly outlined, building a logic model is fairly simple. When programs are poorly defined and lack concrete documentation, however, building a logic model may take substantial effort as educators work to solidify unspoken presumptions and hypotheses.[21] A sample logic model is provided below in Figure 2.2.
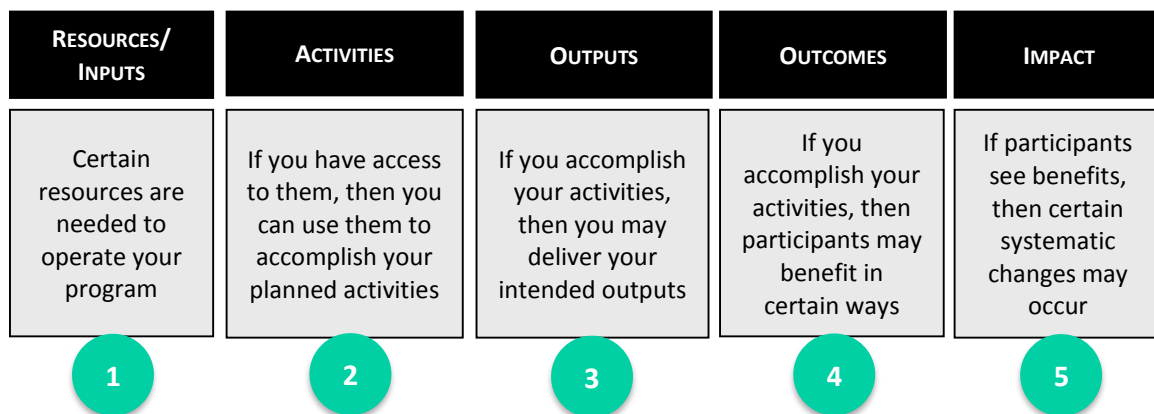
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[18] [1] "Parent and Family Involvement: A Guide to Effective Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in North Carolina Schools," Op. cit., p. 7. [2] Davis, D., Op. cit., p. 4.

[19] Bulleted points taken verbatim from: Davis, D., Op. cit., p. 4.

[20] "Logic Model Development Guide." W.K. Kellogg Foundation, January 2004. p. 3. http://www.smartgivers.org/uploads/logicmodelguidepdf.pdf

[21] Giancola, S. "Evaluation Matters: Getting the Information You Need From Your Evaluation (Draft)." U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2014. p. 18. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/sst/evaluationmatters.pdf

Figure 2.2: Logic Model Components

RESOURCES/ INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACT
Certain resources are needed to operate your program	If you have access to them, then you can use them to accomplish your planned activities	If you accomplish your activities, then you may deliver your intended outputs	If you accomplish your activities, then participants may benefit in certain ways	If participants see benefits, then certain systematic changes may occur
1	2	3	4	5

Source: W.K. Kellogg Foundation[22]

Critically, the logic model allows leaders to categorize the components of their program that they wish to measure. Some districts, for example, may be most interested in measuring the "planned work", such as the number and extent of resources and inputs that support activities. Others may be most interested in measuring the "intended results," or the number and extent of activities and outcomes that occurred as a results of the resources and inputs.[23]

COLLECT

Districts can choose between two main methods to collect the information needed to answer questions about family engagement, including gathering existing data or gathering new data through self-evaluation questionnaires and stakeholder surveys. To collect the most comprehensive set of information possible, however, experts suggest that districts should invest in both methods.[24] According to the CDE, for example, districts that are "innovative implementers" of the principle "Document progress of each school's implementation of its parent involvement program" collect feedback from families, staff, students, and community members through annual surveys *and* track "measures of effectiveness linked to student achievement and specific parent invovlvement activities."[25]

GATHERING EXISTING DATA

Districts can compile and analyze a variety of existing data to evaluate family engagement. These data may come from hard-copy sources, such as sign-in sheets at parent education workshops, or digital sources, such as the number of unique visitors to a parent portal on the district website. Regardless of the data source, experts recommend that districts keep such

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[22] "Logic Model Development Guide," Op. cit., p. 4.

[23] Giancola, S., Op. cit., pp. 16–21.

[24] London, R. "Family Engagement Practices in California Schools." Public Policy Institute of California, June 2016. p. 21. http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_616RLR.pdf

[25] "Family Engagement Frameworks: A Tool for California School Districts," Op. cit., p. 19.

data in a single data tracking system, explaining, "Data-tracking systems are essential for gathering information about the frequency of opportunities for engagement, and participation in those opportunities." Ideally, the tracking system should assign each family and/or family member a unique identifier to allow for easy comparisons across database fields and over time. Even a simple data tracking system can identify relatively detailed information, such as the number of positions on school committees open to parents and the demographics of parents who tend to apply for school committee positions. A more complex data tracking systems could identify more factors, such as the types of committee positions parents tend to fill and the length of time parents spend in those committee positions.[26]

GATHERING NEW DATA

Existing data may not appropriately evaluate all aspects of family engagement. As the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) notes, "**Some aspects of family engagement are inherently difficult to track in a system, such as creating a welcoming environment or using effective communication strategies**." To obtain this information, districts may need to gather new data using alternative methods, such as self-assessment questionnaires or stakeholder surveys.[27] Both questionnaires and surveys allow districts to collect substantial amounts of information from one or multiple populations simultaneously. Below, Figure 2.3 briefly summarizes basic information about these methodologies, as conceptualized by the U.S. Department of Education's guide to program assessment, "Evaluation Matters."

Figure 2.3: Surveys and Questionnaires

BASIC INFORMATION	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
▪ Typically quantitative but can be qualitative ▪ Can be administered in person, over the phone, online, or through the mail	▪ In-person surveys can be a quick way to collect data ▪ If conducted with a captive (in-person) audience, response rates can be high ▪ Electronic or internet-based surveys can save time and costs with data entry and can improve data quality by reducing data entry errors	▪ Due to postage costs and multiple mailings, mail surveys can be expensive ▪ Response rates of mail surveys can be low ▪ If upon data anlysis it is found that questions were not worded well, some data may be unusable

Source: U.S. Department of Education[28]

Districts can choose to use existing questionnaires or surveys, or to create new instruments. Creating new questionnaires and surveys may be more time-intensive, but often allows the designers to better tailor questions to target populations and programs. As the U.S. Department of Eudcation warns, "It is tempting to use an already developed survey without thinking critically about whether it will truly answer your evaluation questions;" however, "existing surveys may need to be adapted to fit your specific needs."[29]

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[26] London, R., Op. cit., p. 23.
[27] Ibid., p. 22.
[28] Content taken verbatim from Giancola, S., Op. cit., p. 48.
[29] Ibid., pp. 44–45.

For those interested in adopting or adapting the content in existing questionnaires and surveys, the Harvard Family Research Project's (HFRP) guide, "Data Collection Instruments for Evaluating Family Involvement" may serve as a useful resource. After identifying dozens of data collection instruments used in research studies to measure involvement as perceived by families and school staff, the HFRP categorized each instrument based on its availability, structure, original test population, and other basic characteristics.[30]

Much like the U.S. Department of Education, the HFRP cautions educators to consider three key issues before selecting an existing instrument for evaluator purposes:[31]

- Alignment of program objectives with evaluation instrument: Given its different measures, will the evaluation instrument you selected yield useful information about how well your program is meeting its own particular objectives?

- Applicability to respondents: If your respondents differ from the population in which the instrument was tested for validity and/or reliability, how will this influence your interpretation of evaluation results? Is the format and language of the instrument conducive to the way you are currently engaging with parents, teachers, and others to whom you might administer the instrument?

- Human and financial costs: Will you need to invest resources in building capacity—in expertise or in time—to collect, analyze, or use data that will be harvested from the instrument?

To illustrate the HFRP's categorization of data collection instruments, Figure 2.4 on the following page depicts information for two instruments listed in the guide. For more detailed information on the instruments or to review all instruments in the guide, please refer to the original source.

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[30] Westmoreland, H. et al., Op. cit., p. 12.
[31] Content taken verbatim from Ibid., p. 4.

Figure 2.4: Family Involvement Instruments with School Staff as Respondents

INSTRUMENT	DESCRIPTION	ADMINISTERED TO	ORIGINAL TEST POPULATION	MEASURE STRUCTURE	AVAILABILITY
Parent Efficacy Scales	The Parent Efficacy scales assess parent efficacy through measures for parent perseverance, general ability to influence children's school outcomes, and specific effectiveness in influencing children's school learning.	Teachers	Teachers in a large middle class public school district - Predominantly White respondents in elementary schools	Items scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree).	Available online
Parent–Teacher Involvement Questionnaire: Teacher	The PTIQ-T has three subscales that measure: • Parents' comfort in their relationship with the teacher and with the school • Parent involvement and volunteering in school • Parent–teacher contact	Teachers	Both high-risk and normative samples	21 items on a 5 point Likert scale	Available online

Source: HFRP[32]

ANALYZE

Evaluators use analytical methods to transform collected data into meaningful research findings. The "best" analytical methods for any given data set depend on factors such as data type (e.g., qualitative, quantitative) and volume. Although it is often assumed that data analysis is synonymous with statistical analysis, this assumption is not always accurate. While statistical analysis is often employed when working with quantitative data, other analytical methods are used to examine qualitative data, such as transcripts from in-depth interviews.[33]

All analyses should account for potential biasing factor, as doing so helps evaluators increase accountability and establish analytical validity. Common evaluation biases include history ("any event that takes place during the treatment phase unrelated to the treatment that may account for the particular outcome"), attrition ("clients who drop out of treatment… may influence the outcome results"), selection ("if clients are selected for the intervention, then the results may be skewed because of this selection") and maturation ("general changes in clients that are not specific to the treatment").[34]

SHARE

The final step of program evaluation is to share the findings with the appropriate stakeholder groups and determine what next steps, if any, the district needs to take in response to the findings. When sharing findings with multiple stakeholder groups, leaders

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[32] Ibid., pp. 15–16.
[33] Giancola, Op. cit., pp. 57–58.
[34] Barrett, T. and J. Sorenson. "Human Services Program Evaluation." Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, March 2015. p. 86. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED557770.pdf

may need to "tailor content and presentation style to best reach the intended audiences."[35] Decisions regarding what and how to share information should be based on leaders' understanding of audience needs and confidentiality policies. Stakeholders should receive the information that will be useful for them, but not information that would be inappropriate or illegal for them to know. Notably, some experts even recommend that leaders establish a communications plan for the evaluation findings *before* collecting data.[36]

Data sharing should be accompanied by an open acknowledgement of evaluation limitations. The results of evaluations that were not structured as randomized, controlled experiments are not causal. In other words, evaluators cannot truthfully claim that any positive results are directly attributable to the program. However, those same results may be correlative.[37] To ensure that stakeholders realize the limitations of evaluations, the U.S. Department of Education recommends that final publications include a section on limitations, "including limitations based on evaluation design, analysis of data, and interpretation of findings."[38]

Finally, administrators must understand that data sharing may lead to increased conversations in district communities regarding the methods, subject, or findings of evaluation. As the Office of Head Start observes, "No matter how expertly it is interpreted, one set of data may lead to a wide range of equally plausible interpretations." This increase in conversations is a natural consequence of evaluation, and may even help prompt further evaluations in the district.[39]

SPECIFIC INDICATORS

An examination of the specific indicators districts can use to assess family engagement must begin with a discussion of what an "indicator" actually is. Although the specific definitions of indicators (much like the definitions for metrics) vary in academic and popular literature,[40] "indicator" is used in this report to refer to *measurable behaviors or findings.*[41] The content of these specific, measurable behaviors or findings can be contextualized against *benchmark* data collected from other programs, or *baseline* data collected at the start of the original program. When compiled and tracked together, indicators can compose indices—a tool intended to measure programs against comparative programs—or standards—a tool intended to measure programs against meaningful, agreed-upon descriptions of success.[42] Below, Figure 2.5 illustrates how these specific indicators can inform assessments of program progress, as envisioned by Regional Education Laboratory (REL) Pacific.

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[35] London, R., Op. cit., p. 25.

[36] "Measuring What Matters: Using Data to Support Family Progress," Op. cit., p. 14.
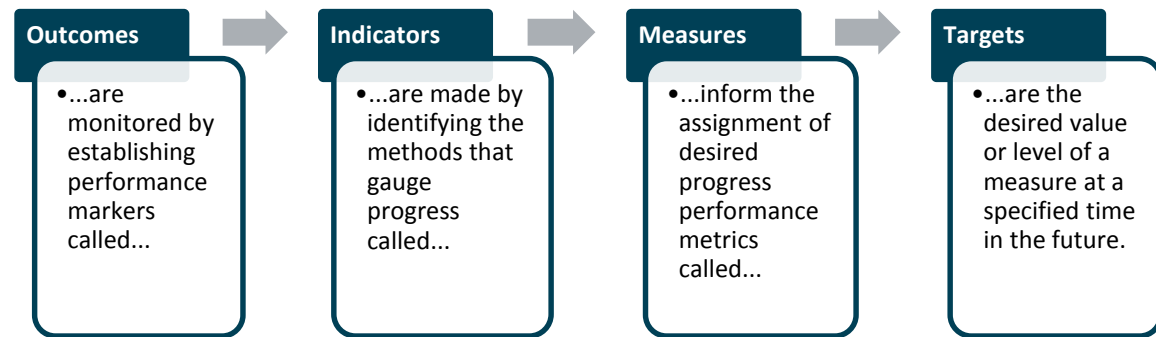
[37] Giancola, Op. cit., p. 63.

[38] Ibid., p. 666.

[39] "Measuring What Matters: Using Data to Support Family Progress," Op. cit., pp. 14–15.

[40] See, for example, "Use Measures, Indicators, or Metrics." Better Evaluation.
http://betterevaluation.org/en/plan/describe/measures_indicators

[41] Malone, N., L. Mark, and K. Narayan. "Understanding program monitoring: The relationships among outcomes, indicators, measures, and targets." REL Pacific, 2014.
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2014011.pdf

[42] "Use Measures, Indicators, or Metrics," Op. cit.

Figure 2.5: Framework for Assessing Progress

Outcomes	Indicators	Measures	Targets
• ...are monitored by establishing performance markers called...	• ...are made by identifying the methods that gauge progress called...	• ...inform the assignment of desired progress performance metrics called...	• ...are the desired value or level of a measure at a specified time in the future.

Source: REL Pacific[43]

Another key concept underlying discussions of indicators is "SMART:" the idea that specific (S), measurable (M), and agreed-upon (A) indicators should be used to measure realistic (R) and time-bound (T) targets. For example, a district interested in assessing teacher quality may use specific, measurable, and agreed-upon indicators, such as "The percentage of teachers who hold National Board certification," to inform the target that "Fifty percent of all teachers will hold National Board certification by September 2017-18."[44]

INDICATORS BY CATEGORY

The literature on family engagement published by researchers, educational organizations, and state departments of education typically does not review specific, measurable indicators that may be used to track family engagement. However, the literature does describe *general behaviors* characterizing family engagement using qualitative language in lists of standards and best practices. These behaviors fall into several broad categories, namely:[45]

- Welcoming Environment
- Effective Communication
- Shared Decision Making
- Community Collaboration
- Supportive Parenting

Hanover developed sample indicators that districts may wish to use to evaluate family engagement in each broad category based on qualitative descriptions of desired behaviors. To showcase which specific components of family engagement the sample indicators can measure, we used the logic model format discussed earlier in this section, which depicts inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. Please note that the applicability of the specific indicators discussed below may vary based on a) the existing family engagement efforts in place at MCSD, b) the data available at MCSD, and c) the ability to collect additional data at

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[43] Malone, N., L. Mark, and K. Narayan, Op. cit., p. 2.
[44] Giancola, S., Op. cit., pp. 30–31.
[45] See [1] "National Standards for Family-School Partnerships," Op. cit. [2] Epstein, Op. cit. [3] "Family Engagement Framework," Op. cit.

MCSD. For more ideas regarding potential indicators of family engagement, please refer to the cited literature describing *general behaviors* characterizing family engagement.

WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

The idea that a welcoming school and district environment contributes to family engagement is visible in the PTA's first national standard, "Welcoming All Families: Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class."[46] Figure 2.6 illustrates an example of how leaders may choose to evaluate a welcoming school and district environment in the context of family engagement using the logic model format.

Figure 2.6: Potential "Welcoming Environment" Logic Model with Indicators

SAMPLE CATEGORY	SAMPLE RESOURCES/INPUTS	SAMPLE ACTIVITIES	SAMPLE OUTPUTS	SAMPLE OUTCOMES	SAMPLE IMPACT
School Staff	▪ Translators (number available, languages spoken)	Offer translators at school meetings	▪ 100 percent of school meetings staffed by a translator ▪ Translators available for all languages spoken by district parents	▪ Majority of surveyed families report satisfaction with translator services	
School Resources	▪ Signs (number in school buildings, languages of)	Provide clear signage in school buildings	▪ 100 percent of schools include signs on all buildings	▪ Majority of school parents report that school site is easy to navigate	▪ Continued strong family engagement
Economic Supports	▪ Childcare (availability at meetings; cost) ▪ Schedules (location of meetings, timing of meetings)	Arrange for economic supports for low-income families	▪ 100 percent of PTA meetings include free childcare	▪ Majority of surveyed families report that nothing prevents them from attending school meetings	
Volunteer Staff	▪ Volunteer mentors for new parents (number, demographics)	Create a volunteer network to welcome new families	▪ All new parents are offered a tour of the school by a volunteer mentor	▪ Majority of surveyed families report satisfaction with the volunteer mentor program	

Source: PTA[47]

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Specific indicators adapted from content in "PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships Assessment Guide." National Parent Teacher Association, 2008. pp. 5–8. http://s3.amazonaws.com/rdcms-pta/files/production/public/National_Standards_Assessment_Guide.pdf

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

The idea that effective communication contributes to family engagement is visible in the PTA's second standard, "Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning,"[48] and Joyce Epstein's second type of involvement, "Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress."[49] Figure 2.7 illustrates an example of how leaders may choose to evaluate communication in the context of family engagement using the logic model format.

Figure 2.7: Potential "Effective Communication" Logic Model with Indicators

SAMPLE CATEGORY	SAMPLE RESOURCES/INPUTS	SAMPLE ACTIVITIES	SAMPLE OUTPUTS	SAMPLE OUTCOMES	SAMPLE IMPACT
School Staff	▪ Translators (number available, languages spoken)	Offer translators at school meetings	▪ 100 percent of school meetings staffed by a translator ▪ Translators available for all languages spoken by district parents	▪ Majority of surveyed families report satisfaction with translator services	
School Resources	▪ Signs (number in school buildings, languages of)	Provide clear signage in school buildings	▪ 100 percent of schools include signs on all buildings	▪ Majority of surveyed families report that school site is easy to navigate	▪ Continued strong family engagement
Communi-cation Plans	▪ Childcare (availability at meetings; cost) ▪ Schedules (location of meetings, timing of meetings)	Arrange for economic supports for low-income families	▪ 100 percent of PTA meetings include free childcare	▪ Majority of surveyed families report that nothing prevents them from attending school meetings	

Source: PTA, Joyce Epstein, Michigan Department of Education, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction[50]

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[48] "National Standards for Family-School Partnerships," Op. cit.
[49] Epstein, J., Op. cit., p. 2.
[50] Specific indicators adapted from content in [1] Ibid [2] "PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships Assessment Guide," pp. 9-12. [3] "Parent Engagement Information and Tools." Michigan Department of Education, pp. 34-35. http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Parent_Involvement_Part_1_12-16-04_111426_7.pdf [4] "Measuring Your Family-School-Community Partnerships." Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. p. 2. https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/fscp/pdf/tk-measure-prtshps.pdf

SHARED DECISION MAKING

The idea that shared decision making contributes to family engagement is visible in the PTA's fourth standard, "Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children;" fifth standard, "Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families;"[51] and Joyce Epstein's fifth type of involvement, "Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives."[52] Figure 2.8 illustrates an example of how leaders may choose to evaluate shared decision making in the context of family engagement using the logic model format.

Figure 2.8: Potential "Shared Decision Making" Logic Model with Indicators

SAMPLE CATEGORY	SAMPLE RESOURCES/INPUTS	SAMPLE ACTIVITIES	SAMPLE OUTPUTS	SAMPLE OUTCOMES	SAMPLE IMPACT
Information about Laws	■ Workshops on student rights (number, times and locations offered, languages) ■ Parent Bill of Rights (availability, languages)	Communicate legal rights of students to families	■ 50 percent increase in attendance at workshops on student rights	■ Majority of surveyed families who feel comfortable advocating for their student	■ Continued strong family engagement
District and School Policies	■ School handbook (availability, languages)	Create clear policies; communicate policies to families	■ 100 percent of families receive a copy of the handbook annually in their native language	■ Majority of surveyed families report that school policies are clear	
Conflict Resolution Process	■ Workshops on conflict resolution (number, times and locations offered, languages) ■ Written procedure for resolving conflicts (availability, languages)	Offer clear channels for conflict resolution	■ 50 percent increase in attendance at workshops on conflict resolution	■ Majority of surveyed families report that leaders are in-tune with school issues and concerns	
Parent Representatives	■ Parent groups (number of, demographics, attendance) ■ Parent representatives (number of, demographics, attendance)	Support active parent organizations	■ 25 percent increase in the number of parents of English Learners in parent groups	■ Majority of surveyed families report that the district is transparent about decision-making	

Source: PTA, Joyce Epstein, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction[53]

[51] "National Standards for Family-School Partnerships," Op. cit.
[52] Epstein, J., Op. cit., p. 5.
[53] Specific indicators adapted from content in [1] Ibid., p. 5. [2] "PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships Assessment Guide," pp. 18-27. [3] "Measuring Your Family-School-Community Partnerships," Op. cit., p. 3.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

The idea that community collaboration contributes to family engagement is visible in the PTA's sixth standard, "Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation;" Joyce Epstein's third type of involvement, "Recruit and organize parent help and support;" and sixth type of involvement, "Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development." Figure 2.9 illustrates an example of how leaders may choose to evaluate community collaboration in the context of family engagement using the logic model format.

Figure 2.9: Potential "Community Collaboration" Logic Model with Indicators

SAMPLE CATEGORY	SAMPLE RESOURCES/INPUTS	SAMPLE ACTIVITIES	SAMPLE OUTPUTS	SAMPLE OUTCOMES	SAMPLE IMPACT
Volunteers	▪ Official communications on volunteering (mediums, content) ▪ Annual survey to identify talents, times, and locations of volunteers ▪ Volunteer training (times, locations)	Encourage volunteering; Identify potential volunteers; follow-up and train volunteers	▪ 25 percent increase in number of parents trained ▪ Increase in the proportion of volunteers from special groups (e.g., English learner parents) relative to family demographics	▪ Increase in percentage of surveyed families reporting that they were invited to volunteer at their child's school	▪ Continued strong family engagement
Partnerships	▪ Partnerships (number, type) ▪ Materials on partnerships (number, type, content, accessibility, languages)	Increase awareness and use of community resources	▪ Increase in percentage of families using partnerships ▪ Demographics of parents using partnerships	▪ Increase in percentage of surveyed families reporting satisfaction with specific partnerships	
Facilities	▪ School facility use (who can access facilities, when, for what reasons)	Increase use of school facilities after-hours for community events	▪ 25 percent increase in number of facilities available for after-hours use ▪ 25 percent increase in number of facilities reserved	▪ Increase in percentage of surveyed families reporting satisfaction with school facility use after school hours	

Source: PTA, Joyce Epstein, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction[54]

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[54] Specific indicators adapted from content in [1] Epstein, Op. cit., pp. 3, 6. [2] "PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships Assessment Guide," pp. 28-30. [3] "Measuring Your Family-School-Community Partnerships," Op. cit., p. 3.

SUPPORTIVE PARENTING

The idea that supportive parenting contributes to family engagement is visible in the PTA's third standard, "Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school;" Joyce Epstein's first type of involvement, "Help all families establish home environments to support children as students;" and fourth type of involvement, "Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning." Figure 2.9 illustrates an example of how leaders may choose to evaluate supportive parenting in the context of family engagement using the logic model format.

Figure 2.10: Potential "Supportive Parenting" Logic Model with Indicators

CATEGORY	RESOURCES/INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACT
Workshops	▪ Annual survey to identify parent interest in workshop subjects ▪ Workshops on parenting and homework help (number, topics, times and locations offered, languages)	Support effective parenting	▪ 10 percent increase in number of families attending workshops ▪ Demographics of families attending workshops	▪ Percentage of surveyed families reporting satisfaction with workshops offered by school and/or district	▪ Continued strong family engagement
Communication	▪ District webpage (number, type of parenting resources for families) ▪ Parent-teacher interaction (number, timing, purpose) ▪ Progress reports (number, timing)	Clearly communicate student progress to families	▪ 20 percent increase in traffic to district webpages for parents ▪ 15 percent increase in number of parent-teacher interactions for positive reasons	▪ Percentage of surveyed families reporting that the district website is easy to navigate ▪ Percentage of surveyed families reporting positive relationships with teachers	
Representation	▪ Parent positions on committees (number of) ▪ Administrator meetings with parent representatives (number of)	Support collaboration between families and administration to improve student learning	▪ Demographics of parents on committees	▪ Percentage of surveyed families reporting that their child's school wants children to succeed	

Source: PTA, Joyce Epstein, CDE, Michigan Department of Education, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction[55]

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[55] Specific indicators adapted from content in [1] Epstein, Op. cit., pp. 1, 4. [2] "PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships Assessment Guide," pp. 13-17. [3] "Measuring Your Family-School-Community Partnerships," Op. cit., p. 3. [4] "Parent Engagement Information and Tools," Op. cit., p. 34.

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