

edWebinar Companion Guide

PART TWO

Preparing for Winter

Strong Tier I Family
Engagement



Effective family engagement is the most underutilized superpower when it comes to improving outcomes



2x

Research shows that family engagement is twice as likely to predict student success as family socioeconomic status

Mapp & Henderson (2002)



\$1K+

Effective family engagement equates to an additional \$1,000 per student in a school's annual budget

Houtenville & Conway, (2008)

Top 10 District-Wide Toolkit Strategies

Choose one per quarter or semester to implement district-wide



ONE

“Just right” communication dosage



- Families should receive at least one but no more than three messages per week from teachers
 - Not including ongoing conversations or time-sensitive alerts
- Teachers can send families more one-on-one messages to establish rapport but should be judicious if they do not get replies
 - If families are not responding often/enthusiastically, teachers should scale back to the 1-to-3 message rule

TWO

Less can be more



- Keep messages short (150 words or less)
- Aim for a 5th-grade reading level to meet families' varied literacy levels

THREE

Be clear about outcomes



- Messaging about the importance of outcomes is an effective practice
- Include information about how this outcome affects students' lives or academic careers
 - *"Students with higher attendance rates are less likely to drop out of high school" or*
 - *"Third graders who can read at grade level are more likely to graduate on time"*
- Include information about policies, definitions, and consequences
 - *"Students are considered absent if they arrive 30 minutes late to school"*

FOUR

Variety for some outcomes and consistency for others



- Messages about certain outcomes are more effective when rotated with other outcomes
 - Evidence suggests that impact may be greater when communication themes rotate each week, e.g. math week one, reading week two, SEL week three
- In contrast, messages on attendance are more effective when sent every week

FIVE

Pay attention to transition points



Think about transitions that happen for students and increase frequency and detail in family engagement:

- **Annual transitions:** e.g., engage about what students can expect and learn how the student is feeling about the return to school
- **Key times within a year:** e.g., change in semester and what that will mean for students and how to best prepare them
- **Transitions within a day:** e.g., how to transition from home to school and school to home each day (share important details that will support success for students)

As resources are developed that support specific students and families, consider making them available to all families

Specifics for older students



- For high school students, consider sending messages to the student in addition to, or instead of, families
 - Relationships between teachers and older students can suffer when too much information is shared with families
- For high school students, personalized information sharing is more effective
 - Granular and specific messages work best; for example, share information about missed classes, not missed days of school

SEVEN

Specifics for younger students



- For younger students, messages with ideas for simple activities that families can do with kids have been effective
- Focus on simple, everyday activities families can do with their student:
 - *"Point out the first letter of your child's name on street signs or products at the grocery store. Ask your child to find a product with the letter on it"*

EIGHT

Know who your families trust



- Messages are most effective when they come from a trusted authority
- Make sure families know where the texts are coming from
- If there the school does not yet have a culture of trust with families, consider partnering with a trusted community organization, like the library

No time? Be encouraging



- If you lack the resources to personalize messages with student-specific info, sending messages with important information and encouragement can be nearly as effective

TEN

Weekdays versus weekends



- Weekday texts are more helpful for higher-achieving kids; weekend texts are more effective for lower-achieving kids
- When sending one message/week without time to differentiate, send on the weekend
- If sending more, spread them out throughout the week with one on the weekend



Thank You!



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