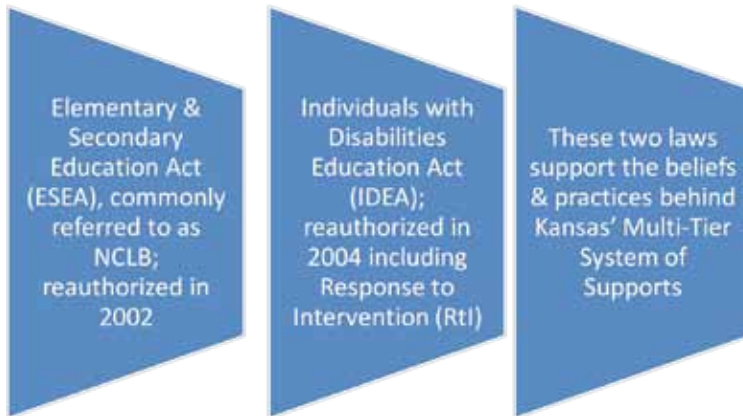


FAMILY ENGAGEMENT: A CRITICAL COMPONENT TO BUILDING AN EMPOWERING CULTURE IN THE KANSAS MULTI-TIER SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS (MTSS)



Requirements for family engagement are found in almost all federal and state education statutes and regulations. The 2002 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) defines parent involvement as “the participation of parents in regular, two way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities; including ensuring that parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning.” The 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures parents have the opportunity to be members of any decision making

team for their child. The Kansas State Board of Education recognized the importance of family engagement by endorsing the PTA National Standards for Family School Partnerships in January of 2008. Family engagement is a critical component in creating an empowering culture within schools.

Family engagement is a key aspect of Kansas MTSS. For this reason, schools must make a concerted effort to involve families as early as possible. The PTA National Standards for Family School Partnerships focus on what families, schools, and communities can do together to support positive student outcomes. Each of the six standards includes quality indicators for successful partnerships. The standards are available on the National PTA website, www.pta.org. Additional information on the standards is available at the Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC) website www.kpirc.org.



Within the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) framework, an empowering culture is a key component that supports the effective instruction of students. Families should be involved from the beginning as a school creates an empowering culture to support implementation of MTSS. Families need information on how MTSS will impact their children. This includes understanding what data will be collected, how it will be used and what supports will be provided to their child. The supports provided through MTSS do not replace a parent’s right to request assessment of his/her child for special education or any other entitlement services offered by the school.

The PTA National Standards for Family School Partnerships contains six standards that provide a framework for achieving a high standard of engagement for families and the community. The following pages highlight steps schools can take to achieve the six standards which build and sustain an empowering culture.

Standard 1. Welcoming All Families Into the School Community

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.

Strategies for Welcoming All Families Into the School Community:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff smiles and greets families warmly • Staff builds relationships with families • Leaders provide professional development for educators on building family-school partnerships • Schools send a "welcome to our school" postcard • Schools offer a family-friendly website • Schools host a variety of events to involve families (e.g., Open House, new family orientation, back to school nights, first day of school celebration, "sneak peek night" for families to experience a school day routine, "Donuts with Dad," and "Muffins with Mom") • Schools and families develop and distribute a Parent Involvement Policy and Parent School Compact • Schools maintain a "welcome to our school" bulletin board, banner, and posters • Schools provide an "introduction to our school" DVD | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools provide a family information resource center • Schools provide child care for school events • Schools provide refreshments and child entertainment at family events • Schools offer a family to family mentoring program • Schools and/or families provide school tours to new families • Schools ensure materials are reflective of a variety of cultures • Schools ensure materials are available in multiple languages • Schools provide free family and student activities and events • Schools affirm student cultures and history in school resources, classrooms lessons and activities |
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Standard 2. Communicating Effectively

Families and school staff engage in regular, meaningful communication about student learning.

Strategies for Communicating Effectively:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff makes contact with families to communicate positive experiences • Staff takes time to address all parents/guardians questions • Staff allows time for bi-directional communication during parent teacher conference (e.g., student led conferences) • Staff provide home visits to families • Schools provide families with data on student progress • Staff and families communicate on a regular basis (e.g., communication notebook, letters, postcards, e-mail, phone calls, text messages, website, newsletters) • Schools provide language and sign interpreters for effective communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools translate written documents into multiple languages • Schools provide families with clear information about policies, programs, improvement efforts, and events • Schools provide clear information on choosing courses, programs, and transition activities at the secondary level • Schools offer parents/guardians opportunities to ask questions and make recommendations (e.g., conferences, suggestion box, forums, surveys) • School/district leadership provides incentives to staff for communication efforts • Schools maintain websites to provide current information • Schools provide information about special events on district access channel and radio |
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Standard 3. Support 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.

Strategies for Supporting Student Success:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff provides families with resources and/or strategies to support learning at home (e.g., summer learning packets, literacy backpacks, math games, reading lists)• Schools provide parents/guardians with opportunities to participate in setting student goals, monitoring progress, and making instructional decisions (e.g., 504 plans, intervention strategies, Individualized Education Programs) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools host family math and reading nights• Schools post class information (e.g., homework, grades, test schedule) on website or make it available to parents/guardians• Schools facilitate book studies for parents/guardians• Schools provide parent education workshops (e.g., homework help, behavior support, nutrition)• Staff provides families opportunities to volunteer (e.g., tutor, read stories, reinforce positive behavior) |
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Standard 4. Speaking Up for Every Child

Families are empowered to be advocates for their own children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

Strategies to Promote Speaking Up:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools conduct needs assessments, satisfaction and feedback surveys on a variety of topics (e.g., bullying, curriculum, finances, school programs)• Districts provide a system for resolving concerns and filing complaints (e.g., system using a district office and board of education member liaison)• Schools provide a system for parents/guardians to ask questions, voice concerns, and offer suggestions for improvement (e.g., suggestion box, appointments with staff, forums) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools provide parents/guardians with information about the availability of advocacy training through community organizations• School staff ensures every student has a parent or another adult who advocates for them (e.g., grandparent, other relative, foster parent, Education Advocate, Court Appointed Special Advocate, etc.)• Schools provide a link about current legislation that would affect children or education on school/district website |
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Standard 5. 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.

Strategies for Sharing Power:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools invite parents/guardians to participate in leadership committees (e.g., site council, MTSS leadership team, school improvement team, development of parent involvement policy and compact)• Schools collaborate with parents/guardians in the development and implementation of behavior management plans• Schools actively recruit diverse membership on all committees (e.g., socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic, race/ethnicity)• Schools collaborate with PTA and other parent organizations to support positive student outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools provide opportunities for families to participate in the development of policies, programs, improvement efforts, and events (e.g., Title 1, vision and mission statements)• Schools provide opportunities for committee members to enhance their skills and knowledge to fulfill committee responsibilities (e.g., site council and diversity training)• Schools include parents/guardians on committees (e.g., diversity council, school foundation) |
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Standard 6. 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.

Strategies for Collaborating with Community:

- Schools provide information about community organizations (e.g., bulletin board, newsletters, pamphlets)
- Schools invite businesses to partner with them in a variety of ways (e.g., donations, volunteer opportunities, apprenticeships, field trips, secondary transition, positive behavior expectations)
- Schools provide families with referrals to community agencies and programs (e.g., mental health, Big Brothers & Sisters, food banks, English as a second language programs for adults)
- Schools involve business and community leaders in leadership committees (e.g., site council, MTSS leadership team)
- Schools invite community members to participate in specific school activities (e.g., 'table hosts' during lunch, music programs, physical education field days)
- Schools provide opportunities for families to participate in community events (e.g., parade floats, booths, fairs)
- Schools collaborate with institutions of higher education and career and technical education schools (e.g., secondary transition, early college credit, GED)
- Schools collaborate with community early childhood programs (e.g., Head Start, child care centers)
- Schools partner with other agencies to perform community service projects

Application of standards and strategies to Kansas MTSS



A critical piece in improving the culture of a school to improve student performance is meaningful family engagement. Research in this area shows a convincing relationship between positive parent involvement and student success (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The strategies listed in this document can be applied to MTSS and, when implemented, help to build an empowering culture.

Building strong family-school partnerships is not accomplished by simply hosting a series of events for families. True family-school partnerships are built by focusing on family engagement as part of a school's coherent plan. The PTA National Standards for Family School Partnerships provides a plan for schools to implement programs, practices and policies that encourage partnerships between families, schools and communities and promote student success.



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