



# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT INVENTORY TOOL FOR SCHOOL REOPENING AND RECOVERY: INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

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## Overview<sup>1</sup>

Family engagement in student learning and achievement is a central element that enriches and improves a student's ability to apply the knowledge and skills gained in the classroom across all facets of their personal, academic, and social life. The New Jersey Department of Education recognizes the significant role of family engagement. It is one of three essential components of its district support and intervention framework – New Jersey Tiered System of Support (NJTSS) -- which provides a foundation for strong district and school leadership, a positive school culture and climate, and **family and community engagement** that gives schools a structure to meet the academic, behavioral, health, and social/emotional needs of all students. Schools can build organizational capacity to effectively and authentically engage families in the support of their children's learning and development by building a culture of respect and inclusion, supporting and coaching families on their competence and confidence in their roles as education partners through two-way communication and recognition of family assets, engaging families in decision making processes such as program design and other leadership roles, and addressing the whole student through connections to the community and other supplemental services.

When schools shifted to remote learning, there arose a clear need for a playbook on how to successfully manage a shift in the learning conditions. The **Family Engagement Inventory Tool for School Reopening and Recovery** offers you or a parent group an opportunity to gather a team of stakeholders and collect their perspectives on family engagement practices across four domains. The results can help build and strengthen staff and families' capacities to create partnerships that will benefit all students. The four domains are:

- I. **Communication.** How schools keep parents/families informed and engaged through multiple means of regular, two-way communication that shares information vital to student success.
- II. **Parent/Family Engagement in Student Learning.** How schools view parents/families as partners in facilitating student learning and support parents, families and school staff in supporting families in this role.
- III. **Engagement in Decision-Making.** How schools include families as partners in making decisions about school programs, policies, and supports focused on student and family needs and strengths.
- IV. **Strategic Family and Community Partnerships.** How schools serve as community hubs for language and literacy development that connect families and students with resources in their neighborhoods, municipalities and beyond.

For each domain, you will be asked to think about the diversity of families and students in your school district, and how each of their strengths, needs, and perspectives are reflected in your school.

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<sup>1</sup> This tool is an adaptation of Boone, B. & Wellman, M., & Villareal, D. (2018). *Partnerships for Literacy Series: Family and community engagement for early literacy inventory*. Retrieved from The Ohio State University: <http://u.osu.edu/familyschoolpartnerships/earlyliteracy/> and the New Jersey Tiered System of Support Parent and Family Engagement Assessment Tool.

The purpose of this tool is to reflect and think about what is currently happening in your schools, what is working well, and what is missing that can help enrich the engagement piece for all families. The team members will decide together current practices that can be improved, expanded, changed, or eliminated. The goal is a plan of action steps to be implemented school-wide to support families as partners and improve learning for ALL for students.

**Connect the Dots: Aligning this Inventory Tool with Improvement Plans.** The tool is not a stand-alone resource but should be used in conjunction with student literacy progress data, school climate data, and other sources of data available to the school. It aligns with NJTSS, allowing school teams to go deeper in their assessment of family engagement at all tiers of instructional support. The assessment also provides schools that receive Title I, Title III, and IDEA funding with a tool and process for including families in evaluating and developing a school plan for engaging families<sup>2</sup>.

## Completing the Family Engagement Inventory Tool

### **Step 1: Create Your Team**

This tool is intended to be completed by parents, school staff, students and community partners. When selecting team members, it is important to include family members who reflect the diversity of your school and community, including families of children with disabilities, families of children receiving supplemental instruction, families who are learning English, families led by grandparents, foster parents, etc. Each member will bring a valuable perspective to the family engagement assessment process.

Suggestions for team members include:

- Teachers (e.g. various grade levels and content areas, including teachers of English language learners and teachers of students with special needs);
- School and district administrators, including Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads;
- Non-teaching staff such as counselors, nurses and front office staff;
- Students
- Parent and family representatives; and
- Other district policy makers, as appropriate, including board members, after-school programs, etc.
- Community based organizations that support students learning and social emotional growth, including libraries, medical professionals, etc.

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<sup>2</sup> Include reference to NJDOE website's information on ESSA Family Engagement Requirements or: Leadership Conference on Education, "Parent and Family Engagement Provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act" <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/education/ESSA-Parent-Family-Engagement.pdf> (retrieved on 2/28/2019)

**Step 2: Conduct the Assessment**

**Directions**

<p><b>1. Select a facilitator.</b></p>	<p>Once a team is formed, select a facilitator who will be familiar with the tool and will lead the team through discussions of each item.</p>
<p><b>2. Identify and remove barriers to accessing the meetings and materials .</b></p>	<p>Considering the team members, determine resources your team will need to allow each team member to participate fully. This may include, but is not limited to an interpreter, a meeting location and times convenient to everyone, childcare, or transportation. If an interpreter is used, be sure to explain the role of the interpreter. For example, that the interpreter should be on the side “invisible” as the group communicates with the individual. The group should not talk to the interpreter.</p>
<p><b>3. Distribute this inventory tool to the team.</b></p>	<p>Distribute this Family Engagement Inventory Tool to each team member or provide accessible ways for members to review the document. Depending on the team’s preference, the facilitator may read each item or allow team members to consider each item on their own.</p>
<p><b>4. Allow individuals time to reflect on the items.</b></p>	<p>As the team works through the items, team members should be given the chance to reflect on the items individually. Their responses should be based on their personal experiences and observations within the last year.</p>
<p><b>5. Rate the school’s practices on the two (2) rating scales.</b></p>	<p>For each item, team members should consider two ratings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Team members should first provide a rating based on their perspective and experience of the quality of the school’s current practices. In other words, how well does our school do this based on my experience with my classroom, my children, etc. Team members should select ( <input type="checkbox"/> ) one of these 3 ratings:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Well Done</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Acceptable</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. The second rating is a measure of how much this practice is conducted in the school. Is it practiced School Wide (SW) at Some Grade Levels (SG), in Some Classrooms (SC), or virtually.</li> </ol>
<p><b>6. Discuss as a team.</b></p>	<p>The facilitator will provide time for team members to discuss their individual responses with the rest of the team, citing their experience, examples, or evidence to support their selection. The facilitator should be careful to allow all members of the team to have a chance to share their perspectives. All viewpoints are important and needed. Encourage team members to take notes on their own copy, and to save it for future meetings.</p>
<p><b>7. Decide on final ratings for each item</b></p>	<p>The facilitator should record the team’s responses and conduct an informal vote amongst the members to select one final rating that is agreeable for all team members.</p>

<b>8. Is additional information needed?</b>	When additional information is required to inform the rating for an item, the team should record this on the inventory and determine how the information will be gathered and the person(s) responsible to do so. Additional information can be gathered from school records, meetings with parent groups or staff, etc.
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**Step 3: Assess Priorities and Create an Action Plan**

When all items on the inventory tool are completed, the team can use the following reflection questions to determine the team’s priorities:

1. In what areas do you feel most successful?
2. Where is there room for growth and improvement?
3. What action steps came to mind while your team completed the assessment tool that you could implement in your school?
4. What further information do you need to take action in areas of growth/improvement? How can you get this information?
5. What are your next steps?

For the Family Engagement Action Plan, together, the team can develop practical and relevant recommendations on based the next steps identified. The action plan should focus on no more than three (3) areas where you would like to begin implementation or improve or expand implementation of relevant activities. Your plan should include detailed tasks, timelines for each task, and person(s) responsible for completion of the tasks.

**Step 4: NOW, work your plan! Contact the START - EPSD Parent Group Specialist for your county if you are interested in assistance with implementing the assessment.**