

# Family Involvement or Family Partnerships



## Why Family Partnerships Matter?

Families are essential to ensuring their child's safety, security, well-being, and educational success. There are distinctions between the terms "Family Involvement" and "Family Partnerships." An involved family may take part in activities the school determines, but families engaged in developing family partnerships through meaningful engagement will become a part of the school's decision-making process. Through partnerships, schools help provide families with opportunities to offer input, develop abilities, and have ownership over ideas. Family partnerships meet the needs expressed by families. Family involvement meets needs identified by schools (Epstein et al., 2019).




## What's the Difference Between Involvement and Partnership?

Schools embed both family involvement and partnership activities to engage families. Both involvement and partnership opportunities are vital in supporting the continuum of opportunities for diverse families (Ferlazzo, 2011).

Common Experiences	Involvement	Partnership
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>viewed as school responsibility</li> <li>families play limited or unclear roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explicitly viewed as a shared responsibility and opportunity between home and school</li> </ul>
Homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>given with the expectation of independent completion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>seen as an important home to school "touch-point" designed to expand learning</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>often one-way from school to home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>two-way between home and school through multiple means</li> </ul>
School Events Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>planned by staff for families</li> <li>few parents tend to participate in school events or committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>planned jointly with input by families</li> <li>efforts are made to bust barriers to authentic participation for all</li> </ul>
Engaging Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>primarily initiated by the school with designated staff</li> <li>success is measured on number of parents attending events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>family partnership efforts are embedded in the work of ALL staff members and leadership</li> <li>evidence of positive goal-directed relationships to improve child and family outcomes</li> </ul>

## Ideas or Actions to Consider

Use table below to record your own ideas or actions to move from parent involvement toward partnerships

Ideas	
	
	
	

## Want to Learn More?

Consider engaging in additional learning through one or both of the courses available at [Edupaths.org](https://edupaths.org).

- Family Partnership Foundations 1.0
- Family Partnership Foundations 2.0



## References

Epstein, J.L., Sanders, M.G., Sheldon, S.B., Simon, B.S., Salinas, K.C., Jansorn, N.R., Van Voorhis, F.L., Martin, C.S., Thomas, B.G., Greenfeld, M.D. and Hutchins, D.J., 2018. School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action. Corwin Press.

Ferlazzo, L. (2011). Involvement or engagement?. Educational Leadership, 68(8), 10-14.

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