

## The Welcoming School: Authentic Family Engagement in Highly Diverse Schools

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### Workshop Learning Objectives

- ▶ Identify how welcoming your school(s) are to families.
- ▶ Learn key strategies to work with families as equal partners in the education of our diverse students.
- ▶ Examine our core beliefs about family engagement.
- ▶ Gain an understanding of how the School Committee's role is crucial to ensure educational equity through policy, and intentional and strategic school-family partnerships.

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## Why is Authentic Family Engagement Important?

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### Impact on Students with Engaged Families:

Dr. Karen Mapp Harvard Graduate School of Education

- ▶ Exhibit faster rates of literacy acquisition.
- ▶ Earn higher grades and test scores.
- ▶ Enroll in higher level programs.
- ▶ Are promoted more and earn more credits.
- ▶ Adapt better to school and attend more regularly.
- ▶ Have better social skills and behavior.
- ▶ Graduate and go on to higher education.

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### Authentic Family Engagement Requires a Shift in Mind Set

From seeing family engagement as an add-on, extra work, a burden, or fundamentally separate from what we are supposed to do as educational practitioners...



To seeing family engagement as an essential, fundamental component of proficient and effective teaching and learning practice.

Dr. Karen Mapp Harvard Graduate School of Education

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### Family Involvement vs. Family Engagement

- ▶ The Latin root of the word "involvement" is "involvere" which means to wrap around, cover or envelop; roll, or cause to roll.
- ▶ The Latin root of the word "engagement" is "engare" which means to make a formal agreement, to contract with; to pledge; an obligation to do something.

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## Authentic Family Engagement is:

- ▶ A shared responsibility
- ▶ Continuous from cradle to career
- ▶ Reinforces learning that takes place in all settings

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## Family Support Principles

- ▶ A strengths or asset-based approach to looking at families.
- ▶ Assumes all families have strengths regardless of circumstance.
- ▶ "Power with" vs. "Power over"
- ▶ Asking the question, "How can I help you?" vs. "I know best what you need."
- ▶ Affirms and strengthens families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and enhances their ability to function in a multicultural society.

(From: Guidelines for Family Support Practice, 1996)

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"How much like you  
do I need to be?"

How much like me  
am I free to be?




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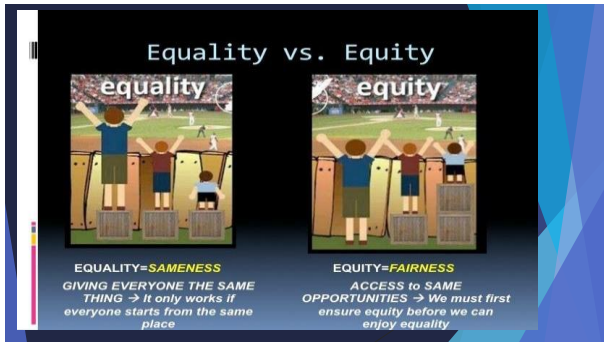
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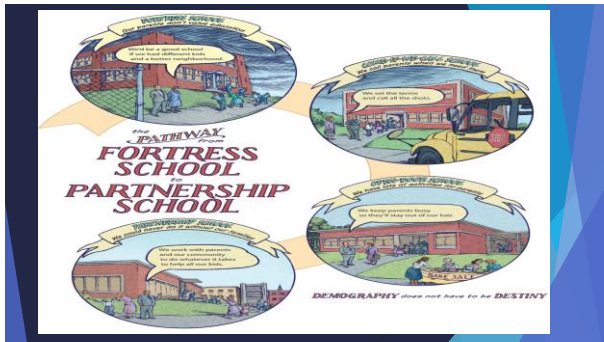
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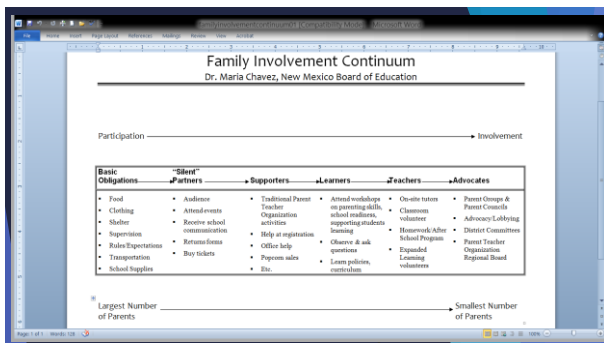
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**\*\*\*Beliefs Survey Questions\*\*\***

- ▶ All Parents have dreams for their children and WANT THE BEST for them.
- ▶ All parents have the CAPACITY to support their children's learning.
- ▶ Parents and school staff should be EQUAL PARTNERS.
- ▶ The responsibility for building partnerships between school and home RESTS PRIMARILY WITH SCHOOL STAFF, especially school leaders.

www.caferesources.org

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## 6 Family Engagement Action Steps to Promote Educational Equity

Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP)

- ▶ Families are fundamental for the well-being of children, communities, and society at large.
- ▶ All community members, especially parents, can direct their strengths to mobilize a social movement for excellence with equity.
- ▶ Families, schools, and communities share the responsibility to work together to raise children with the digital media skills necessary for school and workplace success.

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## 6 Family Engagement Action Steps to Promote Educational Equity (cont.)

Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP)

- ▶ Comprehensive educational policies on family engagement are necessary for all children to achieve success.
- ▶ It is necessary to make a shift in evaluation efforts from an emphasis on perspectives from privileged institutions and "experts" to a deeper acknowledgment and active incorporation of different worldviews, including those from cultural/ethnic minorities and economically disadvantaged communities.
- ▶ Parents need support and empowering experiences in order to become advocates and agents of change.

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## Board Policy Role in Family Engagement - Questions to Ask:

- ▶ Do you have a specific Family Engagement policy? If so, when was it last reviewed or updated?
- ▶ Do you have a Parent, Family and Community Partnerships policy?
- ▶ Does your Title I Parent Engagement policy and accompanying procedures take into account that 1% of Title 1 dollars are to be used for parent/family engagement activities?

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## Board Policy Role in Family Engagement

- ▶ Ensure policies are aligned with your family engagement philosophy so policy and practice are working together.
- ▶ Work with staff to identify policies that need to incorporate updated family engagement language, where this language should be included if it doesn't currently exist, and where family engagement principles need to be embedded in policies.
- ▶ Make intentional decisions about resource allocation based on family engagement as a priority.

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## Reframing Family Engagement . . .

From an individual parent's or teacher's "job"	• To a shared responsibility
From random acts	• To systemic approaches from cradle to career
From events	• To results-driven
From add-on services	• To purposeful connections to learning
From compliance	• To focus on learning, improvement, accountability, and innovation
From limited data	• To transparent data systems

Harvard's Family Engagement Project

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# QUESTIONS??

Thank you for attending!

Mary Fertakis, M.Ed.  
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