



GUK PLAYBOOK PROFILE 2020

Family Engagement

research basis

Research shows that family involvement has to start early. The more parents and family members are invited and feel like they are welcomed at their child's school, the more likely they are to be more involved after elementary school. The first step is building the bridge between families and schools. Once that is complete, we need to throw out the welcome mat and make sure we invite and give them the initiative to take part in their student's education. Lastly, we need to make sure we have additional resources at hand to help these families and show them how to play an active part in the education system.

(Education World: Linda Starr)

what

GEAR UP Kentucky employs four, evidence-based strategies for students and families: (A) Essential Skills & College Transition Curricula (social-emotional skills, academic discipline, career exploration, and financial literacy); (B) Advising & Assessments (college readiness assessments, academic planning, college knowledge, and college match/fit); (C) Campus Experiences (summer enrichment programs and college visits); and (D) Leadership Development (peer mentoring, peer tutoring & peer leadership/ambassador programs). **Each strategy includes parallel family activities and resources to empower parents and family members to fully support the aspirations and academic progress of their children.**

why

Driven by a large body of research showing the impact of family engagement on student success, GEAR UP Kentucky Family Engagement efforts seek to increase the percentage of GUK students graduating high school and enrolling and succeeding in postsecondary education.

- Community and Family Engagement: Regardless of its structure, families have a critical impact on how students value education, perceive themselves as capable of achieving their goals, and access financial resources to pursue them (Thompson & Cuseo, 2012; Manning, 2018).
- Family Engagement benefits the school as well as the community. GEAR UP Kentucky provides tools and mechanisms for parents, family members, and other caring adults to serve as a voice for students, families, schools districts, and communities.
- Research shows that family engagement starts young (Education World: Linda Starr). Participation in GEAR UP Kentucky Engagement events and activities is open to any and all middle or high school parents, family members, or other caring adults involved in a student's education. **The goal is to generate interest and familiarity with GEAR UP Kentucky services, increase family involvement in students' educational pursuits, and reinforce the importance of the role that families play in determining educational success.**



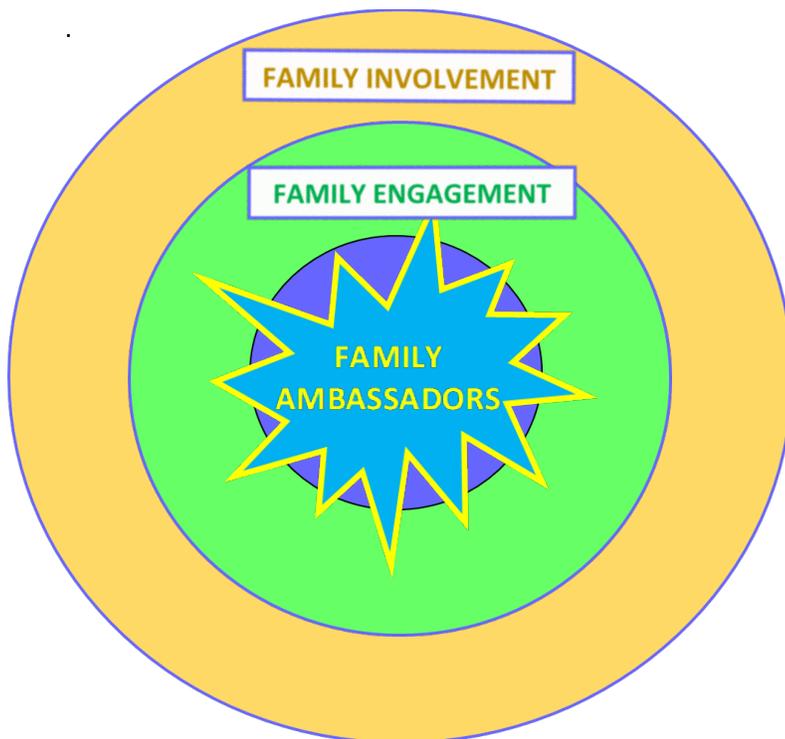
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how

A. GUK Family Engagement activities by Approach:

1. GEAR UP Kentucky employs a **concentric approach** to Family Engagement efforts, both at the local and the statewide levels.
2. Each circle involves a different type and intensity of involvement, from which individuals may choose to “step in” or “step out” at any time. The goal is for parents, family members, and other caring adults to engage in a manner that is most appropriate for them, their student, and their family’s needs – all the while allowing for maximum flexibility.



Family Involvement – individuals in this circle (outer ring) like to **receive information** about their student, but are not necessarily interested in two-way communication. They may attend events for their student as their work schedules or family needs permit, but are typically not able to commit to participation in activities beyond this (**note: this does not mean that they are any less interested in supporting their student’s education!*).

Family Engagement – individuals within this circle (middle ring) like to **exchange information** about their student, **through two-way communication** with school staff, GUK staff, and/or parents, family members, or other caring adults of other students. They are looking to actively engage and/or dialogue with others at a level that support the needs of them and their student, but are not necessarily interested or able to commit to anything beyond this.

Family Ambassadors – individuals in this circle (center) like to **take an active lead** in helping to ensure a successful educational experience for their student. They **seek to find and participate in opportunities to engage with others** through two-way communication, training, networking, and leadership activities. Often times, these individuals will often become involved with advocacy efforts on multiple levels: within their student’s school, the district, the community, and beyond – as they believe strongly in promoting education for other students.



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how (cont'd)

B. GUK Family Engagement activities by Cohort:

- 1. Priority Service Cohort Communication & Outreach:** Family members will receive information about resources, tools, activities, and opportunities designed to **help them support their student's educational progress and overall readiness for postsecondary success**. Emphasis is placed on identifying the student's most appropriate postsecondary path (including college match & fit), and facilitating the completion of various, corresponding steps to ensure postsecondary success via enrollment, persistence, and completion.
- 2. Full Service Cohort Communication & Outreach:** Family members will receive information about resources, tools, activities, and opportunities designed to **help them support their student's educational progress and overall readiness for the transition to high school**. Emphasis is placed on corresponding, core GUK curriculum designed to promote academic and non-academic skills necessary for the transition to high school and – ultimately – postsecondary success.
- 3. All Cohorts: Family Ambassador Projects** – Local Family Ambassador teams will design and implement either a school or district-based engagement project that is: a) based on identified local needs and b) aligned with GUK goals and objectives. Teams may be selected to share outcomes with their peers at the Annual GUK Institute for a College-Going Culture, to create a self-sustaining, peer-learning community for families.
- 4. All Cohorts: GUK Institute for a College-Going Culture (Annually)** - A track of workshops dedicated to developing and supporting family leaders offered at the annual GUK Institute for a College-Going Culture, a 1.5 day convening of GUK stakeholders



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GEAR UP Kentucky Family Engagement services require the cooperation and collaboration of multiple stakeholders. Teamwork provides strength and capacity, while partnerships advance the identification and implementation of key opportunities for parents, families, and other caring adults.

A. GEAR UP Kentucky Staff roles and responsibilities:

- 1. College & Career Coaches (CCC's)** serve as the point of contact for GUK Family Engagement events and activities involving **Full Service Cohort** students and families.
- 2. District Program Manager (DPM's)** serve as the point of contact for GUK Family Engagement events and activities involving **Priority Service Cohort** students and families. DPM's are also tasked with ensuring coordination necessary for **district-level family engagement activities**, via routine supervision of CCC's.
- 3. School & Family Services Specialist (SFSS)** provides targeted support and ensures the exchange of key information for statewide implementation of GUK Family Engagement efforts, thus representing **the "link" between GUK direct service staff and administrative members of the GUK Statewide Team**. The SFSS is available to answer questions and provide guidance to CCC's and DPM's around specific implementation matters as they relate to established GUK Family Engagement goals and objectives.
- 4. Regional Program Coordinators (RPC's)** provide **supervision and any necessary approval** for GUK Family Engagement needs **at the regional level**. RPC's **may also serve as a liaison** between DPM's and the School & Family Services Specialist (SFSS), DPM's and the Statewide Family Engagement Coordinator (SFEC), or DPM's and the Project Administrative Team (PAT), around matters related to GUK Family Engagement Services.
- 5. The Statewide Family Engagement Coordinator (SFEC)** is tasked with the **overall implementation of the statewide GUK Family Engagement strategy** under the GUK Strategic Plan. The SFEC serves as the administrator of the statewide GUK Family Ambassador Facebook page, develops messaging for designated GUK Family Engagement audiences, identifies potential partnerships, and serves as the subject matter expert for GUK family engagement resources, tools, events, and activities.
- 6. Documentation of Family Engagement events and activities** shall be maintained for each cohort. GUK **College & Career Coaches** and **District Program Managers** will enter all Family Engagement-related events and activities via data collection tools and mechanisms applicable to their respective roles (ex. GUSS, MS Excel, GUK Quarterly Reports). CCCs and DPMs may submit supplemental or additional information to Statewide Family Engagement Coordinator.



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B. GEAR UP Kentucky Parent / Family Member / Other Caring Adult roles and responsibilities:

1. Parents, family members, and other caring adults of GUK Cohort students **are expected to sign documentation related to the provision of GUK services for their student**, to include permission forms for GUK field trips, career/industry visits, or other activities.
2. Parents, family members, and other caring adults of GUK Cohort students are requested to **share contact information** that allows for maximum efficiency and effectiveness of GUK services for their student (*ex. cell phone number for GUK family text messaging*).
3. Parents, family members, and other caring adults of GUK Cohort students are asked to **notify GUK staff of any changes** with their student that would **significantly impact GUK service delivery**.
4. Parents, family members, and other caring adults of GUK Cohort students are asked to **participate in designated GUK family engagement activities** as their schedules permit.
5. Parents, family members, and other caring adults of GUK Cohort students are asked to **communicate and cooperate with the school/district** as it relates to their student's educational needs and eligibility for participation in GUK activities.
6. Parents, family members, and other caring adults of GUK Cohort students are asked to **engage in whatever manner is most comfortable and feasible** for them and their student.
7. Parents, family members, and other caring adults of GUK Cohort students are asked to **contact their CCC or DPM for assistance with any needs related to GUK services** for their student.



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C. GEAR UP Kentucky School Partner roles and responsibilities:

1. GUK School Partners **are expected to take an active role** in supporting GUK Family Engagement services via the following:
 - a. Provision of **existing information, mechanisms, and activities** related to family engagement efforts at the school and/or district level – **to include any areas of needs or opportunity for improvement.*
 - b. Assistance with **obtaining and confirming contact information** of parents, family members, and other caring adults for use with GUK Family Messaging
 - c. **Promotion of GUK family engagement events and activities** for student cohorts served by GUK
 - d. **Allocation of resources** to assist with GUK Family Engagement efforts at the school or district level (*ex. approving FRYSC's participation on School Site Team*)
 - e. Agreement to **provide space / facilities** for GUK FE events and activities – **with prior notification to, and approval from, the School Site Team or administration.*
 - f. **Participation in GUK-sponsored events, activities, and professional development opportunities** as provided by GUK or GUK vendors (*ex. College Equipped Readiness Tool [CERT], TI-Nspire, Collaborative on Teaching and Learning [CTL], GUK Institute for a College-Going Culture, NCCEP District Leadership Academy, etc.*)
2. GUK School Partners are requested to **maintain ongoing communication with GUK staff** to ensure that GUK Family Engagement services are implemented in the most efficient and effective manner possible, for all parties involved.

D. GEAR UP Kentucky Vendor, Consultant, and Partner roles and responsibilities:

1. GUK Vendors, Consultants, and Partners shall **maintain ongoing communications with designated administrative and management GUK Staff**, to ensure appropriate nature and scope of services, as well as fidelity to the grant.



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who (cont'd)

E. GEAR UP Kentucky Family Ambassador roles and responsibilities:

1. GUK Family Ambassadors will **engage in annual GUK Communications & Outreach initiatives** as determined by the GUK Family Engagement Strategic Plan (ex. Family Ambassador Facebook Group).
2. GUK Family Ambassadors shall engage in **peer recruitment efforts and community awareness activities** including, but not limited to:
 - a. **Sharing and promoting information** about GEAR UP Kentucky Family Engagement services and opportunities via:
 - i. Platforms: Social media, email, texting services, handouts/flyers, newsletters, promotional items
 - ii. Events: Open houses, local media, sporting events, back-to-school nights, KHEAA events, parent/teacher conference nights, etc.
 - b. **Cultivating key relationships** with peers, schools, and community members
 - c. **Serving as the example** for other parents, family members, and other caring adults to follow
3. GUK Family Ambassadors shall **participate in routine activities and leadership development opportunities**, as identified and approved by the corresponding entity in question:
 - a. Routine activities: monthly meetings, student & family engagement events, service projects, etc.
 - b. Leadership development opportunities: training or advocacy events, PTAs/PTOs/SBDMs, GUK Institute for a College-Going Culture, Prichard Committee activities and initiatives (ex. Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership)
4. GUK Family Ambassadors **shall communicate routinely with designated GUK staff** (as appropriate); each of whom provides guidance in various capacities
 - a. College & Career Coaches (CCC's),
 - b. District Program Managers (DPM's),
 - c. Regional Program Coordinators (RPC's)
 - d. Student & Family Services Specialist (SFSS)
 - e. Statewide Family Engagement Coordinator (SFEC)

additional research

Establishing a parent ambassador program has three key benefits:

- **Increases your reach.** In some schools, 90% of new families enroll because of word of mouth recommendations from current parents. A parent ambassador program can formalize this process, giving you the opportunity to equip current parents with talking points about your school. This puts structure and strategy behind what many parents do freely—share what's working for their family.
- **Improves your manpower.** An ambassador program can provide vital support during open houses, neighborhood coffees, tours, prospective student visits, and other events. Parent ambassadors can even help write thank-you notes or perform follow-up calls. This can be particularly effective for small teams or if you have a tight budget.
- **Provides authenticity.** An ambassador program gives your school the unique ability to share authentic stories. Parents are savvy and sometimes skeptical—they do their research before they come to your school. A real parent's perspective is honest and believable, and no price can be put on an unpaid endorsement.

SOURCE:

<https://isminc.com/advisory/publications/the-source/benefits-parent-ambassador-program>



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who (cont'd)

5. GUK Family Ambassador participation is **open to all parents, family members, and other caring adults (of GUK Cohort students) involved with a student's education:** *Many low-income students have families with low levels of educational attainment and limited experience (if any) navigating college processes, resulting in a lack of family support and advocacy* (Thompson & Cuseo, 2012; Manning, 2018).
 - a. While focused primarily on its identified full and priority-service cohorts, GEAR UP Kentucky recognizes the socioeconomic and cultural considerations of its service population. Consistent with the Four Pillars and the F.A.C.E.S. of Postsecondary Readiness, **GUK Family Ambassadors serve as an additional, integral source of support** in addressing the gaps that exist for some of the students served by GUK.
 - b. GUK places a **heavy emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion** in the implementation of its Family Engagement services. Accordingly, GUK Family Ambassadors are **urged to be the voice for students and/or families facing barriers unknown to schools or service providers** (ex. no internet access, language barrier, specialized learning needs, etc.)
6. GUK Family Ambassadors are charged with the **identification and completion of a service project that meets the identified needs of their local school district and community.** These Service Projects must support and align with GEAR UP Kentucky goals and objectives; all tasks must be accomplished through the coordination of individuals and resources as follows...
 - a. Family Ambassadors shall observe an annual \$500 budget for use with service projects. The service project may not exceed \$500 total; however, donations are encouraged, and \$25 of the \$500 may be used to purchase some type of incentive. **NOTE: Donations are preferred over purchases, and the purchasing of gift cards is strictly prohibited.*
 - b. Family Ambassadors shall ensure documentation of Service Project planning, purchasing, and completion in conjunction with designated GUK staff (ex. CCC or DPM)
7. GUK Kentucky Family Ambassador **roles and responsibilities are revisited annually** for possible changes driven by data and feedback received from families, schools, partners and GUK.
8. GUK Family Ambassadors are expected to **comply with established school and/or district-level policies and practices, as applicable and appropriate.**



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when

Recruitment of parents, family members, and other caring adults for GUK Family Engagement efforts takes place each August or September, and continues throughout the school year. Consideration of special themes, timeframes, and events is encouraged for recruitment efforts (ex. National GEAR UP Week, FAFSA Frenzy, return from Winter Break, etc.)

where

GUK Family Engagement activities take place in **both the physical and virtual realm**, with an emphasis on social media and online communication platforms. GUK Family Engagement events and activities **should coincide with student-centered events and activities, school-sponsored events, and community activities**, to increase the likelihood of family members attendance and participation.

GUK Family Engagement activities may or may not take place at the school. ****Any and all GUK Family Ambassador and Family Engagement activities taking place on school premises must include prior notification to, and documented approval from, the appropriate school personnel.*** GUK staff will coordinate with the school administration, and/or the GUK School Site Team, to secure space and resources (ex. reliable Wi-Fi connection, projector, etc.) associated with any meetings or other activities conducted at the school.

partners

GEAR UP Kentucky partners formally and informally with a variety of local, state, and national entities to enhance its provision of Family Engagement services. The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence represents one such partner with whom GUK collaborates to further its goals and objectives around student success. Other partnerships include local and regional Chambers of Commerce, the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE), Kentucky Youth Advocates, the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL) thru Prichard, and various Family Resource & Youth Service Centers (FRYSC). The goal of these partnerships is to maximize exposure to information, tools, and resources that increase families' capacity to support their student's educational experience and – ultimately – facilitate student success. Similarly, GUK staff should identify opportunities to collaborate with other partners, such as local media (ex. newspapers, radio stations, etc.) to promote GEAR UP Kentucky in the family and community engagement realms.



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how we measure success

1. The effectiveness and impact of GUK Family Engagement is **measured both qualitatively and quantitatively, through established GUK tools, channels, and mechanisms.** Examples may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Data Reporting System (ex. GUSS)
 - b. Vendor or Product-Specific Reporting Mechanisms (ex. Signal Vine)
 - c. GUK Logic Model
 - d. GUK Quarterly Reports
 - e. GUK Team Structure – PIT, PDT, RPCs, GU Scholars, PMT, PAT
 - f. GUK Strategic Plan
 - Strategy #1: Communication & Outreach
 - i. Number of individuals engaged via FB Group Page / Family Messaging
 - ii. Response Rate for Family Surveys
 - Strategy #2: Advising & Assessments
 - i. Response rate of parents, family members, other caring adults responding to CERT and/or other college readiness assessment tool-related family messaging
 - Strategy #3: College Campus Visits & Experiences
 - i. Attendance rate of parents at GUK Summer STEM Academies, Campus and Career/Industry visits, Residential Summer Academies
 - Strategy #4: Leadership
 - i. Percentage of GUK parents, family members, and other caring adults taking part in leadership opportunities
2. GUK will employ a **continuous quality improvement approach** for use with its Family Engagement efforts. The use of standard tools, processes, and mechanisms will **incorporate feedback from families into routine evaluation tasks**, and allow for **ongoing development and refinement of annual strategic planning activities.**
 - a. Surveys or Questionnaires
 - b. Data Reporting Systems & Tools (ex. GUSS, Signal Vine, Survey Monkey, etc.)
 - c. Event Evaluation (ex. GUK Institute)
 - d. Meeting Minutes (*as applicable)
 - e. GUK Quarterly Reports