

Tips to Engage Families for the 2020-21 School Year

(*Adapted from Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center's "How Ohio Schools can Engage Families for the 2020-21 School Year")

- (1) Place families' needs and concerns at the center of district, school, and classroom planning.** Families love and care for their children and want to support their education. When schools **engage in family-centered planning**, they ask, "How will this plan or policy affect our families' ability to support and engage in their children's learning?" **Where barriers to equitable participation are identified...adapt and adjust plans to create conditions for all families to engage.**

- (2) Equip families to talk with their child about transitioning back to school.** Whether in person, hybrid, or fully online, school will look different this year. The key to preparing is to **explain what to expect, provide emotional support for children's feelings, acknowledge the many uncertainties we are all facing, and express confidence in the collaboration between the school and the home...**

- (3) Clarify role expectations for teachers, other staff, students, and families, no matter whether school will be in person, hybrid, or fully online.** These should include **health/safety expectations and well as learning support expectations for both families and school staff.** Remember, expectations for the roles of families should be flexible...include choices, and...come with supports they need to be successful in their role. For example, if families are expected to read with their second grade child, then the school should provide videos demonstrating how and should ensure families have access to appropriate books...

- (4) Embrace effective two-way communication.** How will you communicate to reach all families? Can communication platforms be streamlined (to use) a few platforms well? Consider the number of different platforms families with multiple children will have to access to help their children and stay informed. **How can you ensure communication will be equitably accessible for all families?** When communicating with families...**elicit regular feedback from parents and caregivers to inform improvements and approach communication proactively and with honesty.**

- (5) Help families connect with each other** ...Helping to building strong social support networks for families will strengthen your school community and will enhance trust. **Consider proactively how important milestones and events will be celebrated in different formats this year.**

- (6) Recognize the strengths and determination of families in these times of uncertainty.** Take time to **build trust with students and families** and to **support the social and emotional aspects of the transitions** we will all experience in the days ahead.

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