Indicator Explanation

DOMAIN	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Culture	Build a strong community intensely focused on student learning	4A.4 The school facilitates two-way communication and face-to-face meetings among school personnel, students, and students' families to work together to advance student learning.

Many education stakeholders share responsibility for children's learning and development (Sheridan et al., 2019). All stakeholders within a school community should be focused on optimizing conditions for student learning, and work together to ensure that every aspect of a school's culture incorporates high academic expectations for all students (The Center on School Turnaround, 2017; 2018; Herman et al., 2008; Louis et al., 2010). Culture impacts all aspects of a school, and focuses attention on what is important and valued (Deal & Peterson, 2016). While every school is unique, they each seek to prepare students for future success in college, career, and in life generally (Garza, 2017). Regularly bringing together school stakeholders for purposes of promoting student learning and future success is supported by a solid foundation of research that emphasizes the academic, social and emotional benefits of family-community-school partnerships (Hill, 2015; Sheridan et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2020).

Engaging the School Community in Students' Learning
The benefits of family engagement are well documented in the research literature, including for children's academic achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2003; 2005; Wilder, 2014), behavior (Sheridan et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2019), social-emotional functioning (Sheridan et al., 2019), and social skills (Smith et al., 2019). Not surprisingly, family-school partnership interventions that include supports for building relational processes (e.g., communication and collaboration) and structural components (e.g., home-based involvement) that are aimed at engaging parents or other caregivers in children's education and development, also have broad research support (Sheridan et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2020).

According to Darling-Hammond et al (2019), all aspects of children's educational environment must support their development. They write:
> This calls for a deeply integrated approach to practice that supports the whole child in schools and classrooms that function coherently and consistently to build strong relationships and learning communities; support social, emotional, and cognitive development; and provide a system of supports as needed for healthy development, productive relationships, and academic progress. This holistic approach must necessarily connect with family and community context: developing strong, respectful partnerships to understand and build on children's experiences and, as needed, to strengthen any aspects of the developmental system where there are challenges to children's health and well-being. (pp. 98–99)

When staff and parents are armed with information on child development they can work together within a developmentally informed framework to foster healthy development and learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2018). For example, the evidence-based School Development Program addresses 6 developmental

pathways—social-interactive, psycho-emotional, ethical, cognitive, linguistic and physical—by building collaborative working relationships among educators, parents, community leaders, and healthcare workers to address the whole child (Darling-Hammond et al., 2018). The program teaches all parties about child development within a shared framework for multi-tiered supports, and has been shown to improve attendance and behavior, school climate, and achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2018; Emmons & Comer, 2009; Lunenberg, 2011). Similarly, community schools, which serve as hubs that include integrated school and family supports and family/community engagement, bring communities, schools and families together to support whole-child development and learning (Maier et al., 2017).

Family-school partnerships that enhance student achievement and result in school improvement are linked to student learning and connect families/community members to school and district teaching and learning goals (Mapp & Kutner, 2013):

> Far too often, events held at schools for parents have little to do with the school or district's academic and developmental goals for students. These events are missed opportunities to enhance the capacity of families and staff to collaborate with one another to support student learning. Families and school staff are more interested in and motivated to participate in events and programs that are focused on enhancing their ability to work as partners to support their children's cognitive, emotional, physical, and social development as well as the overall improvement of the school. (p. 9)

Bringing together families and community members around student learning can of course take many forms, such as science fairs for display of student projects, student-created cultural exhibits or other demonstrations of learning, student musical or sports performances, parent participation on school improvement teams, and teacher-parent conferences, for example. The key for the school is to engage families and community members in events and activities that support a wide range of whole-child learning needs (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018).

Communication and Data Sharing. Educators can also establish these collaborative relationships with parents around child development through regular two-way communication. Communication channels that are open and dynamic "invite and encourage parents to share questions, comments, and feedback with teachers, and ensures that families inform educators in addition to being informed by them" (Albright et al., 2011, p. 6). Positive two-way communication between home and school, which involves listening as well as informing, sets the stage for developing a relationship built on trust and respect (Byrk & Schneider, 2003; Hiatt-Michael, 2010). Teachers and other educators should regularly share information and create opportunities for families to communicate their insights, concerns, and hopes for their children; when "families share information about their children, it helps educators support student learning by making curriculum more relevant, motivating students, and developing relationships with and between students" (Garcia et al., 2016, p. 7). Communication should be child-centered, constructive, clear and concrete (avoid educational lingo and acronyms), and continuous (Mart, et al., 2011). Schools must also ensure that communication and engagement strategies are culturally relevant.

The parent-teacher conference provides an opportunity for parents to tell the teacher about their children outside of school in addition to gaining information on their progress, by discussing topics such as evidence of their development in various areas and contexts, interests, and how they enjoy spending free time (Flanagan, 2012). At a minimum, teachers should hold two meetings with parents during the school year to discuss students' progress and behavior in the classroom and to gather input on how they are developing outside of the regular school day. Listening closely to the "parent voice" creates opportunities for parents to share success stories and other insights into their child's development; in fact, conferences should strive for 50 percent teacher/50 percent parent talk time (Garcia et al., 2016). Parent-teacher conferences alone may not be enough to help families become comfortable with data, which requires time and regular school-home communication (Garcia et al., 2017). For example:

> Maureen Holt, a reading specialist at Humboldt Elementary School in Dewy-Humboldt, Arizona has… found it helpful to share student data with parents regularly, not just at a conference or meeting. Every three weeks, she

sends home data folders containing printouts about specific skills students are tested on, graphs showing how each student performed, and descriptions explaining the assessment data and any confusing terminology used to explain it. Holt also hosts a data night at the beginning of the year at which she explains the folders to parents, and she schedules one-onone parent meetings as needed or when requested throughout the year. (Minero, 2018)

Academic-Parent Teacher Teams (APTT) represent an evidence-based model that provides families with concrete information on their children's academic progress along with strategies and resources to implement at home to target grade-level learning goals (Paredes, 2015). At team meetings the teacher helps parents set 60-day parent-student academic SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely) goals, and at individual parent-teacher conferences parents and teachers together develop an action plan to optimize the student's learning (WestEd, n.d.). Several studies have demonstrated higher student growth in literacy skills such as word fluency, and positive reception of the program by parents and teachers (Paredes, 2015).

References

For a toolkit of resources for engaging families in data conversations see: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2016153.pdf
For a video on how one school shares data to create stronger parent partnerships see the video embedded in the Minero (2018) citation below.

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