**Facilitator Notes on Day-Long Family Engagement Workshop**

**Improving 9th Grade Student Outcomes**

**The Why, What and How of Secondary Family Engagement**

The primary goal of this workshop is to equip school teams to make significant progress in making a family engagement plan for their school that includes a focus on the transition to high school. The session gives participants a background understanding of the importance of ninth grade for high school graduation and postsecondary outcomes, and the importance of working with families to support them as they seek to support their teens. It includes many ideas for planning useful and effective family engagement activities focused on the transition to high school, as well as a significant block of time in the afternoon for teams to make progress in their planning. It works best in a large room with tables for school teams of 4-6 members.

**Suggested Agenda**

9:30 am Welcome /Introductions/Icebreaker Activity

9:45 am **Why** 9th Grade Matters – Ensuring Positive Outcomes for All Students

10:00 am **What** do families need to know and have so they can help students be successful

in high school?

10:25 am **How** can schools engage families? Events and activities for families who cannot

attend events

11:15 **Search and Discover** – Evaluating Interactive Homework Activities for Families

12 Noon Lunch

12:30 pm **Cycle of Inquiry**: School Team Reflection on a recent family engagement activity

1:15 pm Planning transition-focused family engagement activities for the school year

2:30 pm Group reports of learning and plans

3:30 pm Adjournment

**Why 9th Grade Matters --**  Facilitator shares research findings about the importance of attendance and course passing in 9th grade for successful high school outcomes (Slides 2-8)

**What do families need to know** (Slides 9-12)-- Have small groups at tables brainstorm lists of information that families need that they may not have. After about 10-15 minutes have groups share out in the large group. Slide 12 summarizes some things important to emphasize.

Can families find information easily? Have small groups discuss this. (Slides 13-14). Then facilitator can summarize principles of effective communication (Slides 15-16).

**How to engage families during the transition to high school (slides 17-19) --** Facilitator emphasizes the need to think not only in terms of EVENTS but also about communication strategies with families who may not be able to attend school events.

Slide 18 summarizes some specific types of transition focused events for families. It works well to identify school teams in advance who can share about particular practices and what they have learned in hosting particular types of events.

Slide 19 -- Facilitator can then share some specific strategies for communicating with families who cannot attend events, discussing the strategies on the slide. (It is useful to have multiple people from group who are ready to share their experience using these strategies).

**Interactive homework strategy for engaging families unable to attend events (slides 20-22)** Facilitator introduces the concept of interactive homework (NNPS term is TIPS – Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork). Introduce the four activities have been specifically developed for use with 8th grade families to discuss important issues in the transition to high school (attendance, passing all courses, GPA, and planning for the future – included in workshop handouts on the website). Organize the participants into different groups than the ones they have been with to engage in the “Search and Discover” activity with one of the interactive activities (distribute different activities to different groups, but the group members should all have copies of the same activity to discuss). Search and Discover questions are also included in the workshop handouts posted on the website.

LUNCH

**Continuous Improvement Approach (Slides 24-27)** Facilitator introduces the need for continuous improvement with the cartoon slide, noting the irony: when we are too busy to focus on improvement, we often do things the long and hard way. Facilitator introduces the idea of the cycle of inquiry, in which teams PLAN-DO-STUDY-ACT: plan to introduce a change, collect information about how it works when they do it so they can study the results and decide if the change is likely to lead to improvement.

Facilitator discusses how we can apply this approach to our family engagement work and asks school teams to spend time reflecting on a specific family engagement activity from the recent past, using the PDSA approach and/or the guiding questions from Family Engagement Reflection Tool (versions provided for both HS and MS teams). If time, it is good to have several teams share out with large group their conclusions from discussion.

**Family Engagement Action Planning (Slides 28-32)** -- The final workshop segment provides time for school teams to get a solid start on their family engagement planning. Facilitator should emphasize the importance of linking family engagement plan to the school improvement plan. Facilitator should also introduce the available tools (posted as handouts on the website):

* A planning form that helps teams align their family engagement work with student outcomes emphasized in the school improvement plan.
* Planning calendars
* Ideas for family engagement events and strategies (including survey list of parent information needs, example parent brochure, activity lists/examples)

See all the resources on the “School Teams” and “Resources to Share with Families” sections of the website as well.

**If time permits, have several groups share their plans.**

**WRAP UP**

Wrap-up should emphasize that district leaders will follow up with support, and that additional shorter meetings throughout the year will keep teams from schools connected in a networked learning community. Regular (monthly) family engagement emails also keep ideas flowing and school teams connected.