



**Engaging Families**  
in High School Success

**FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS**

# HIGH SCHOOL FAMILY ENGAGEMENT HANDBOOK

# Families Are Important for Student Success





Research shows that  
Family-School-Community ties  
are a **KEY PILLAR** or an  
**ESSENTIAL SUPPORT** for  
school improvement



# The Goal

How can we improve our work in family engagement so that more high school students enjoy success?

# What Do We Need to Learn From Families ?

What are the family assets students bring with them to high school?

How can we leverage those assets to support student success?



## What Do Families Need to Know?

What do families of high school students need to know and do to help their students graduate ready for college and career?

What steps do high school staff need to take to help equip families to help their students graduate ready for college and career?



Family  
Engagement Is  
Critical  
Throughout  
High School



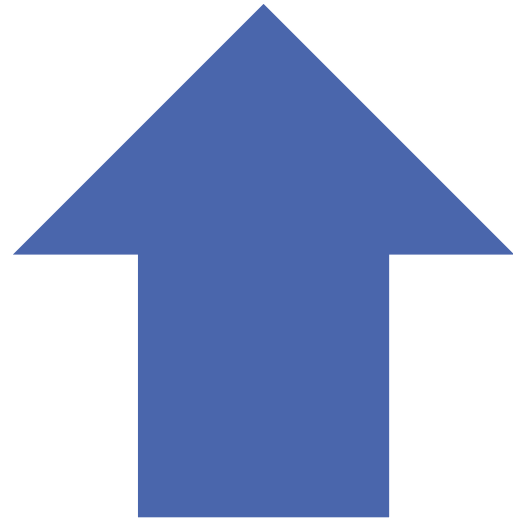
**College Financial  
Aid Workshops  
-FAFSA Help-**

# OUR CORE BELIEFS

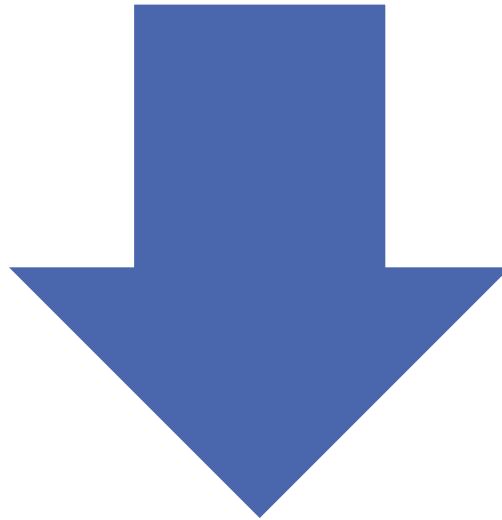
- All parents have dreams for their children and want the best for them.
- All parents have the capacity to support their children's learning.
- Parents and school staff should be equal partners.
- The responsibility for building and sustaining partnerships between school, home, and community rests primarily with school staff, especially school leaders.



**Family  
Engagement  
Goes Down  
Right at the  
Critical  
Juncture for  
Students**



But research shows that at this critical transition to high school



School efforts to engage families tend to go down



9TH  
GRADE

“This is the year that will set the stage for whether high school students will graduate and whether they will be ready for college.”

Chicago Consortium on  
School Research, 2007



Research shows that high school efforts to engage families **PAY OFF** in improved student outcomes.





# Keys to Effective Family Engagement during the High School Years



# Keys to Effective Family Engagement



- a PLAN
- LISTENING to parent and student voices
- a TEAM
- Commitment to REFLECTION and EVALUATION



Beyond  
Random  
Acts of  
Family  
Engagement  
...

Schools need a  
**SYSTEMATIC  
PLAN**

linking family  
engagement  
to desired  
student  
outcomes



# Why do we need a plan?

“A goal without a plan is just a wish.” — *Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, writer*

“Good fortune is what happens when opportunity meets with planning.” — *Thomas Edison, inventor*

“If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll end up someplace else.” — *Yogi Berra, former New York Yankees catcher*

“Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success.” — *Pablo Picasso, painter*

## Family Engagement as Part of the School Improvement Plan

- The family engagement action plan should be a **sub-section of the school improvement plan** (it's not another plan).
- How will the school engage families to help meet its goals for student outcomes?
- How will all family engagement activities relate to improving outcomes for students in all important areas (attendance, achievement, health, citizenship, college and career readiness, etc.)?



What is a  
good  
process to  
arrive at a  
plan?



# Listen to parent and student voices



# Listen to parent and student voices by ...

- Including parents and students on the family engagement team that meets regularly to plan and reflect
- Holding listening sessions with families during events like Curriculum Night and orientation sessions
- Holding listening sessions in community centers and other community venues that are easier for families to come to
- Including interactive activities during school events that allow for discussion among families, students, and school personnel
- Having an open-door policy for administrators to make time for parents to come to the school
- Encouraging email and texting contact with families to communicate about school-related issues

## Link Family Engagement to School Improvement Goals

Consider how to plan family engagement strategies and activities that are linked to overarching goals in your school's improvement plan

### CONSULT YOUR

School

Improvement

Plan



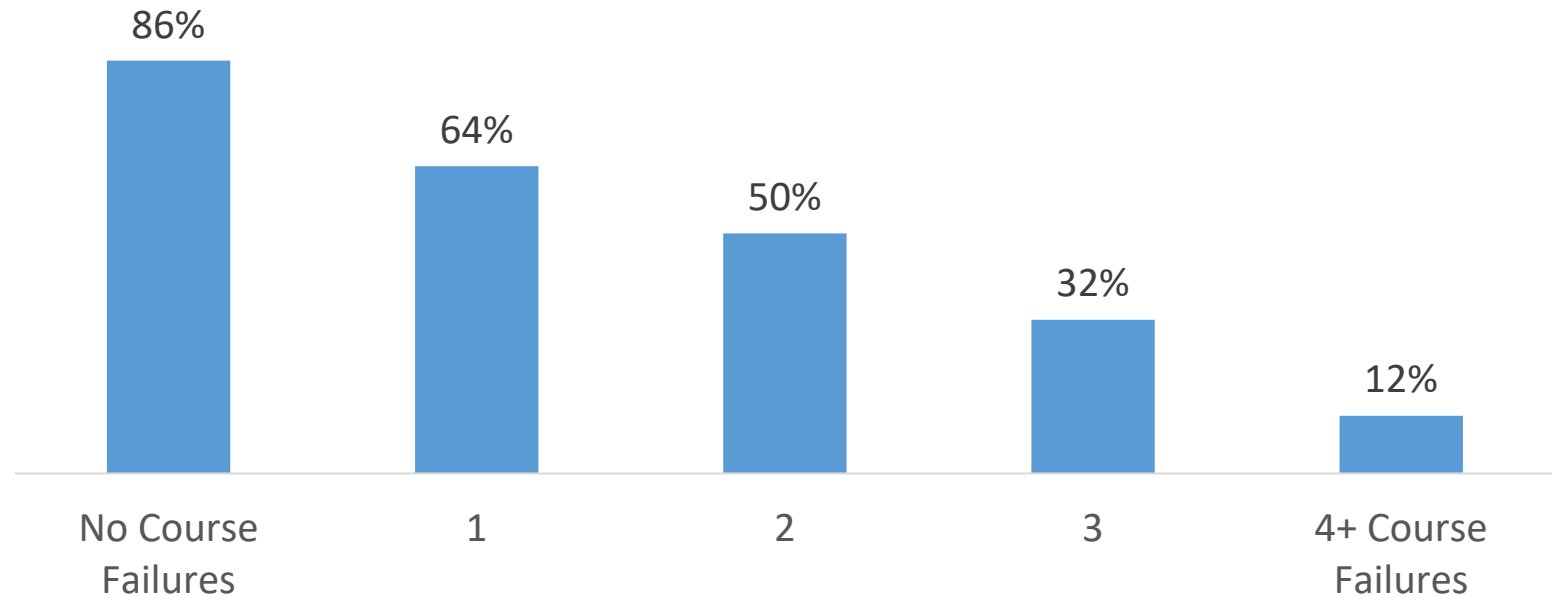
What will help us to plan?

**ACTION PLAN FOR SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS TO REACH SCHOOL GOALS**

GOAL –			
Chair or Co-Chairs: _____			
Desired result(s) for THIS goal:		How will the school measure the result(s)?	
<b>Organize and schedule family and community involvement activities to support THIS goal.</b>			
ACTMTIES (2 or more, continuing or new)	TIMELINE and KEY DATES	WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE FOR EACH ACTIVITY & WHEN?	HOW ACTIVITY ADDRESSES STUDENT PERFORMANCE GOALS
Note if funds, supplies, and/or resources are needed for these activities?			
Add pages to outline more activities that support THIS goal.			



# Ninth Grade Course Performance Predicts Probability of On-Time Graduation



Percentage of SPS Students Graduating on Time, by Number of 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Core Course Failures

Probability of graduating decreases with each 9<sup>th</sup> grade course failure.

# What do families need to know?

- Graduation requirements
- Required classes for graduation and required classes for college
- How math or foreign language placement determined
- Who to contact for specific questions
- When students need to stay home from school, and when to insist they go
- How students can make up missed work during absence
- What resources are available to help students with coursework/homework
- Information about career and technical education options during high school and required prerequisites
- How students can recover credits from failed courses



# Example of HS Family Engagement Plan Component for 9<sup>th</sup> Grade

## ACTION PLAN FOR SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS TO REACH SCHOOL GOALS

<b>GOAL</b> Reduce 9 <sup>th</sup> grade course failure by 10%			
Chair or Co-Chairs: _____			
Desired result(s) for THIS goal: More 9 <sup>th</sup> graders on-track in credit accumulation		How will the school measure the result(s)? Online gradebook reports	
<b>Organize and schedule family and community involvement activities to support THIS goal.</b>			
ACTIVITIES (2 or more, continuing or new)	TIMELINE and KEY DATES	WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE FOR EACH ACTIVITY & WHEN?	HOW ACTIVITY ADDRESSES STUDENT PERFORMANCE GOALS
Orientation for rising 9 <sup>th</sup> grade families about HS.		Work with feeder MS to plan presentations	
Ensure all families understand online portal to monitor student progress		(1) Parent portal workshop advertised in multiple ways (2) Training teachers to use portal.	
School communication plan for At least monthly contact and discussions with families of students with D/F averages		Implementation plan for data to be monitored and communications to occur	
<b>Note if funds, supplies, and/or resources are needed for these activities?</b>			
Add pages to outline more activities that support THIS goal.			

Example of a Promising Family Engagement Strategy to Implement:

Increasing Portal Use



Free																						
Grades: O'Doggle, Ginger Snaps																						
Grades and Attendance		Student ID #: 1234567		Service Learning Hours: 9.5																		
Grade History		State ID #: 9876543210		Grade Level: 9																		
School Bulletin																						
School Information		Click a grade or score to view grade details or comments teachers may have added. Click the [i] to see if a teacher has added assignment details.																				
Exp	Last Week					This Week					Course	Q1	Q2	S1	Q3	Q4	S2	R1	Absences		Tardies	
	M	T	W	H	F	M	T	W	H	F									17-18	17-18	17-18	17-18
1(A)											AP ENG LIT COMP 1 Mr. Teacher	B+ 87	C+ 78	B- 82	[i]	[i]	[i]		2	2	0	0
1(A)				A	A						AP ENG LIT COMP 2 Mr. Teacher	[i]	[i]	[i]	A 95	A 100	A 95		0	0	1	1
2(A)											PHYSICS 1 Ms. Teacher	C 76	B- 80	B 78	[i]	[i]	[i]		1	1	0	0
2(A)					A						PHYSICS 2 Ms. Teacher	[i]	[i]	[i]	A 88	A 92	A 88		7	7	0	0
3(A)											AP AMER GOVERNMENT Mr. Teacher	B- 80	B 83	B- 81	[i]	[i]	[i]		3	3	0	0
3(A)				A	A						AP AMER GOVERNMENT Mr. Teacher	[i]	[i]	[i]	B 88	C+ 78	B 85		8	8	0	0
4(A)											VIDEO PRODUCTION 2 Ms. Teacher	E 57	B+ 87	B 85	[i]	[i]	[i]		3	3	3	3
4(A)				A	A						VIDEO PRODUCTION 2 Ms. Teacher	[i]	[i]	[i]	A 88	[i]	A 88		7	7	0	0

Studies suggest that efforts to increase families' access to the parent portal could help to increase parental monitoring of coursework and thereby improve course passing rates.

er Fred

Grades and Attendance

Grades: O'Doggie, Ginger Snaps

Grade History

School Bulletin

School Information

Class Registration

Assessments

Library

Schoology Access Codes

Advanced Learning

Data Verification Form

SchoolPay

CareDox

High School and Beyond

Preferences

Help

Student ID #: 1234567  
 State ID #: 9876543210  
 Grade Level: 9  
 Service Learning Hours: 9.5

Click a **grade** or **score** to view grade details or comments teachers may have added.  
 Click the [i] to see if a teacher has added assignment details.

Exp	Last Week					This Week					Course	Q1	Q2	S1	Q3	Q4	S2	R1	Absences		Tardies	
	M	T	W	H	F	M	T	W	H	F									17-18	17-18	17-18	17-18
1(A)											AP ENG LIT COMP 1 Mr. Teacher	B+ 87	C+ 78	B- 82	[i]	[i]	[i]		2	2	0	0
1(A)						A	A				AP ENG LIT COMP 2 Mr. Teacher	[i]	[i]	[i]	A 95	A 100	A 95		6	6	1	1
2(A)											PHYSICS 1 Ms. Teacher	C 76	B- 80	B 78	[i]	[i]	[i]		1	1	0	0
2(A)							A				PHYSICS 2 Ms. Teacher	[i]	[i]	[i]	A 98	A 99	A 98		7	7	0	0
3(A)											AP AMER GOVERNMENT Mr. Teacher	B- 80	B 83	B- 81	[i]	[i]	[i]		3	3	0	0
3(A)						A	A				AP AMER GOVERNMENT Mr. Teacher	[i]	[i]	[i]	B 86	C+ 78	B 85		8	8	0	0
4(A)											VIDEO PRODUCTION 2 Ms. Teacher	E 57	B+ 87	B 85	[i]	[i]	[i]		3	3	3	3
4(A)						A	A				VIDEO PRODUCTION 2 Ms. Teacher	[i]	[i]	[i]	A 98	[i]	A 98		7	7	0	0

# STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING PARENT PORTAL USE



- Incorporate parent portal demonstration sessions into all family engagement events at school (with clear advertisement)
- Use multiple communication strategies (robocall, email, text, website, etc.) to encourage families to login to the portal (or find out how they can)
- Use data from district to learn which families have not successfully connected to portal and invite those families personally to demonstration sessions



# Organizing Your Family Engagement Work



# The Need for a Team

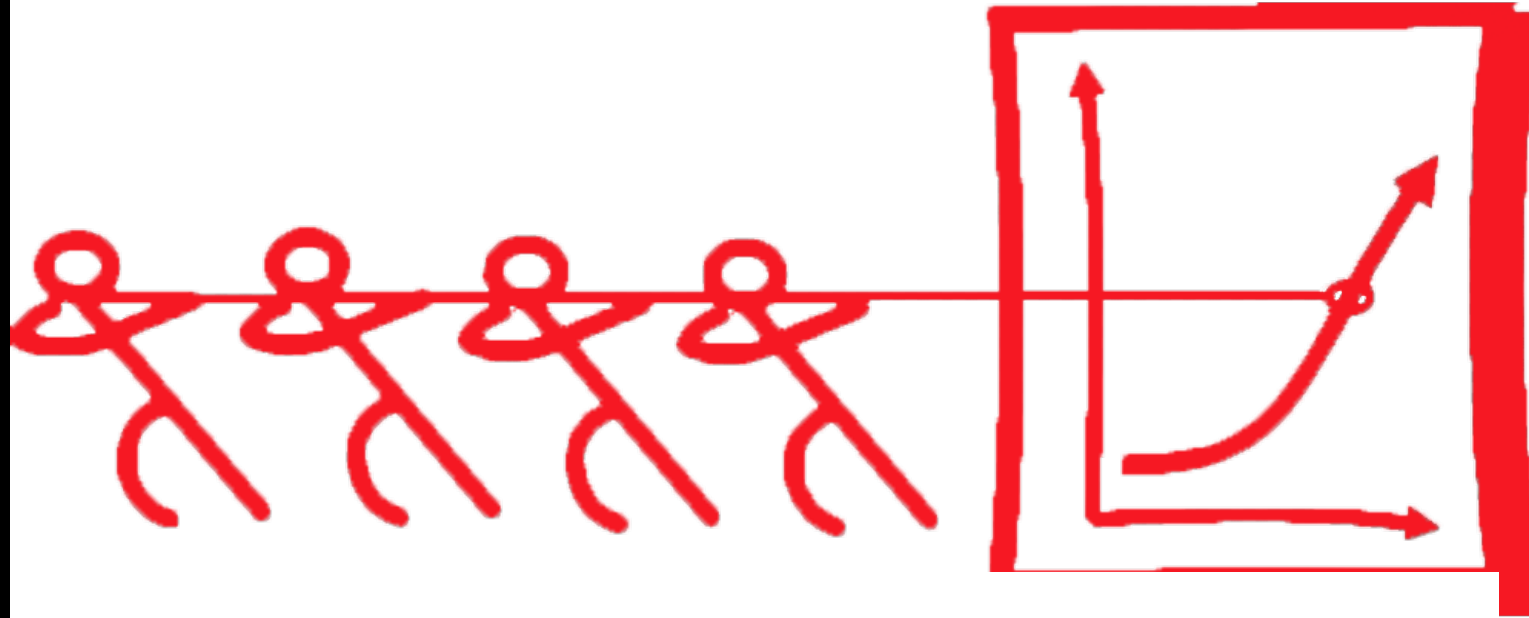




# TEAMWORK

Together Each Achieves More

FreePosterMaker.com



# Why do we need a team?

- Can one person do everything?
- Are multiple perspectives represented by just a single person or two?
- Will a plan developed by just one person address all the needs of school families?
- Do you hear parent and student voices on a regular basis if they are not part of the team?
- Can you reflect and evaluate well by yourself?

Why do we need a team?

Well-organized schools rely on organizational routines and teams (distributed leadership) to work systematically to accomplish critical goals.



# Who should be on the TEAM?



- Administrator(s)
- Teacher(s)
- Support Staff
- Parent(s)
- Student(s)



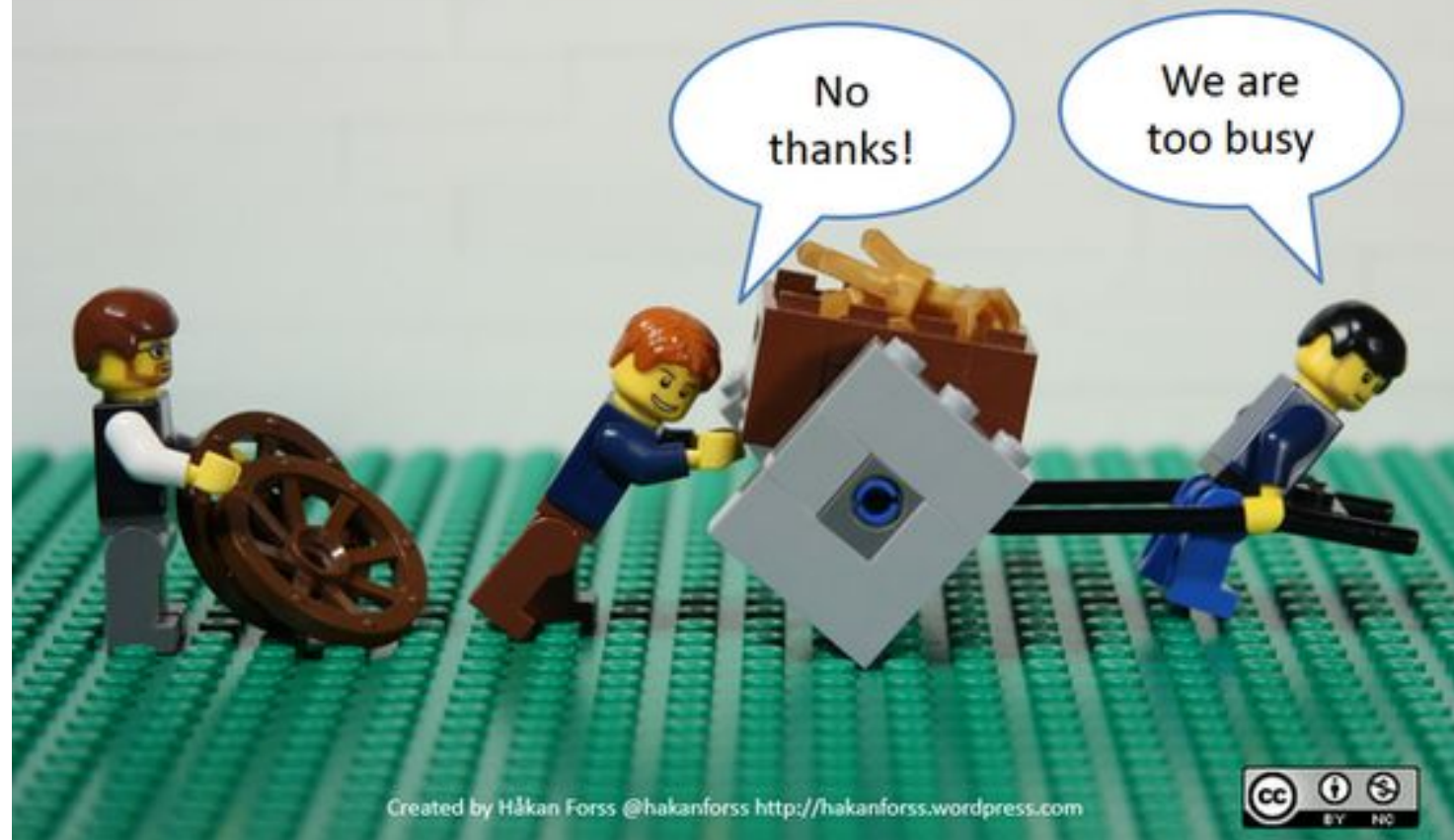


- Regular (once a month)
- Organized
- Provide time to listen to diverse perspectives
- Focused on action steps
- Reflective
- Committed to evaluation and continuous improvement
- Share information with those who could not be present

Why do we often neglect to evaluate?



# Are you too busy to improve?



Time to evaluate

## The Importance of Reflection for Improvement

Teaching involves such a complex set of skills that lessons are almost never perfect. The key to being an accomplished teacher is acquiring the skill to continually improve one's practice; an important vehicle for this is reflection and conversation.

Charlotte Danielson

What is true for teaching is also true for our family engagement practice – which is a critical component of Domain 4 (Professional Responsibilities) of the Danielson Framework.

## Implementing Regular Evaluation

### How can evaluation become a habit?

- Schedule time for reflection and evaluation of activities during each monthly team meeting
- Use family “exit tickets” at events to gather feedback
- Plan in advance to gather data to use in evaluation
- Plan extended time at the end of the year for reflection and evaluation
- Consider engaging in regular “cycles of inquiry” for continuous improvement, using a Plan-Do-Study-Act framework (see “Continuous Improvement in Family Engagement” handbook for more details)



**Evaluation of Activities**  
**School, Family, and Community Partnerships to Reach School Goals**

**PROGRESS IN REACHING TRANSITION-FOCUSED GOAL**

Use *Excellent (E)*, *Good (G)*, *Fair (F)*, or *Poor (P)* to rate each **partnership activity** that is implemented to help reach your Transition-Focused Goals. As a team, discuss the next steps that should be taken to maintain and improve each activity in the next school year. Use additional pages if more than three family and community involvement activities were conducted to reach Academic Goal 1.

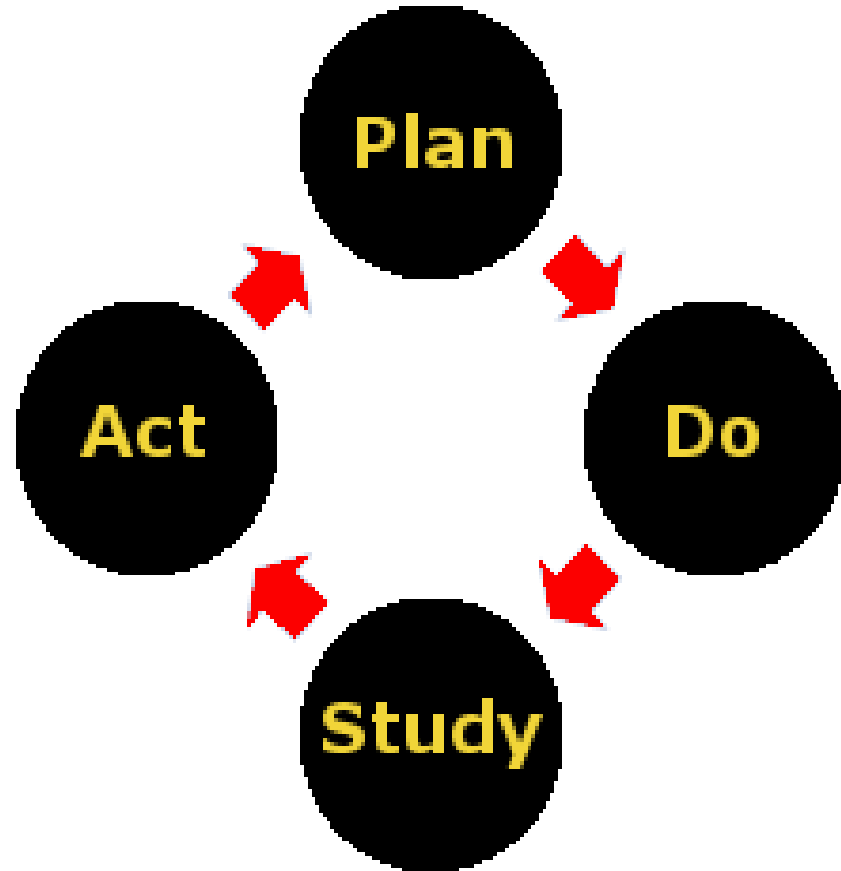
Partnership Activity	Action Team Planning How well was the activity planned?	Support How helpful were ATP members and others at the school?	Implementation How well was the activity implemented? Did it reach the target audience?	Results How well did the activity contribute to desired result(s) for Goal 1?
1. _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will this involvement activity be conducted in the next school year?		YES or NO.		
If NO, why not? _____				
If YES, what should be done to improve this activity? _____				

Partnership Activity	Action Team Planning	Support	Implementation	Results
2. _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will this involvement activity be continued in the next school year?		YES or NO.		
If NO, why not? _____				
If YES, what should be done to improve this activity? _____				

Partnership Activity	Action Team Planning	Support	Implementation	Results
3. _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will this involvement activity be continued in the next school year?		YES or NO.		
If NO, why not? _____				
If YES, what should be done to improve this activity? _____				

# School-Level Cycle of Inquiry Form

## Cycle of Inquiry



Name of school:

Name of event/activity

Date of event/Activity

Person completing form:

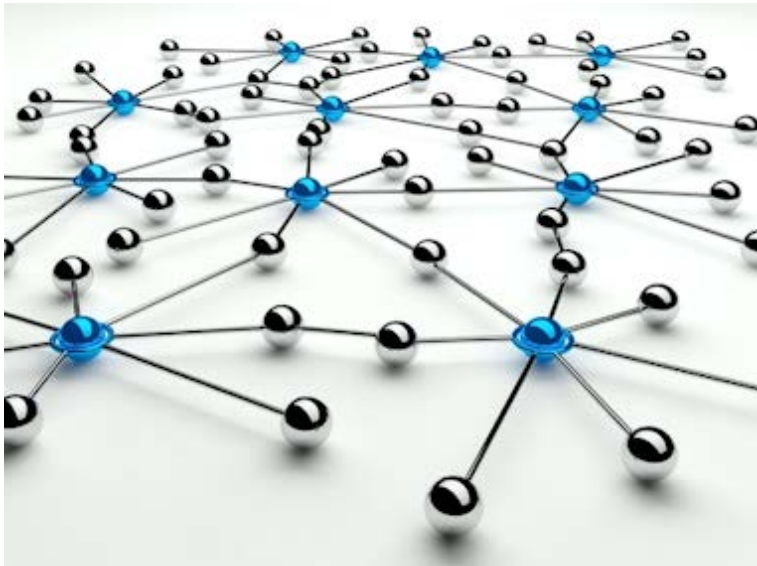
Date form completed

1. Who was involved in planning this activity?
2. What did you plan? What was the goal? How did the goal of the activity address student outcomes? Did you meet your goal(s)? How did the plans for this activity build on learning from the past? What changes/adaptations did you make based on prior learning?
3. What did you observe during the activity? (Who participated and who did not? What did participants experience? What was their feedback? What evidence did you see of how the activity could help to influence student outcomes?)
4. What did you learn? (How does what you observed about the activity lead to conclusions about what is needed to improve family engagement efforts in ways that will lead to improved student outcomes?)
5. How will your conclusions from this experience influence your planning for future family engagement activities (not necessarily the same activity next year)?

# Contact us to continue the conversation

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[ssheldon@jhu.edu](mailto:ssheldon@jhu.edu)



## Additional family engagement resources available on:



[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [PROGRAMS](#) [RESEARCH](#) [TIPS](#) [NEWS](#) [CONTACT](#) [🔍](#)

### Engaging Families for High School Success

This website includes family engagement resources for district leaders, school teams and family members. The resources are focused specifically on helping districts and schools to improve their family engagement efforts during the critical transition to high school. The goal of these efforts is to improve high school student success rates.

#### District Leader Resources

District leader resources include guidebooks and materials for conducting day-long workshop and shorter (90 minute) professional learning community sessions with school teams focused on planning and implementing family engagement activities.

[Access Resources](#)

#### School Team Resources

School team materials include tools for planning, implementing, and evaluating their family engagement work (particularly focused on the transition from grade 8 to grade 9).

[Access Resources](#)

#### Resources to Share with Families

Family resources include a Ninth Grade Family Toolkit, various communication tools, and interactive homework activities for 8th graders and a family member about the transition to high school.

[Access Resources](#)

[www.sfcp.jhucsos.com/efhss/](http://www.sfcp.jhucsos.com/efhss/)

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