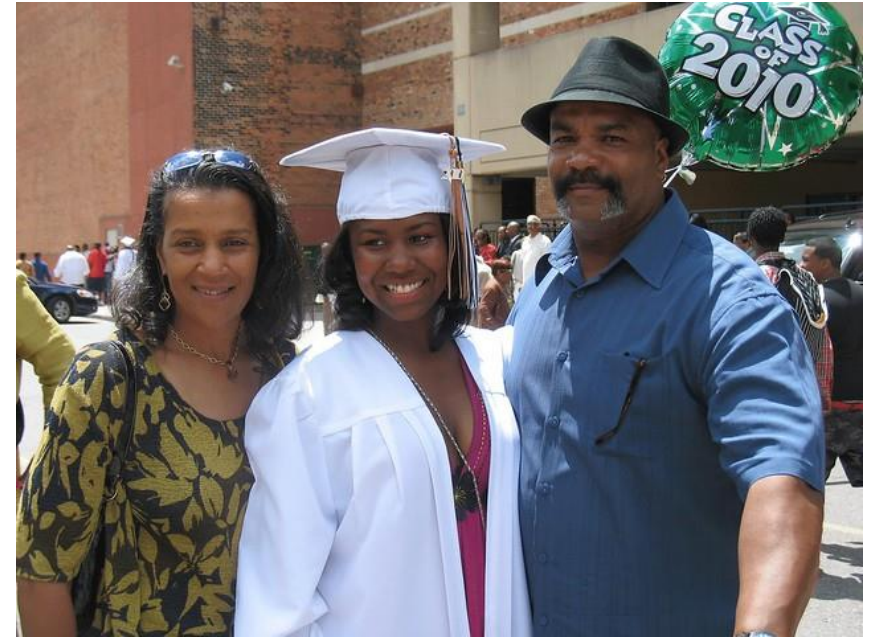


# MINI-HANDBOOK ON DISTRICT LEADERSHIP FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AT THE MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL



**FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS**

# Families Are Important for Student Success

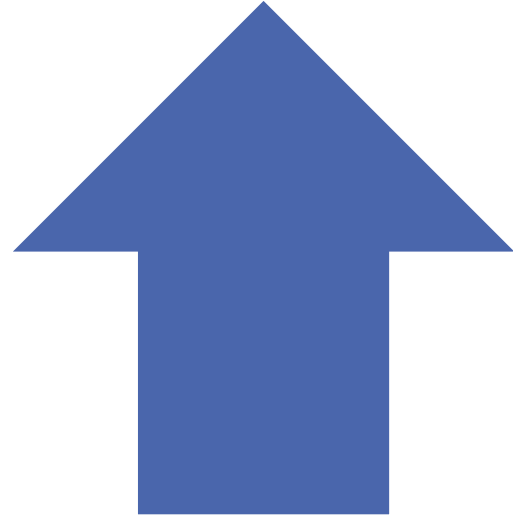




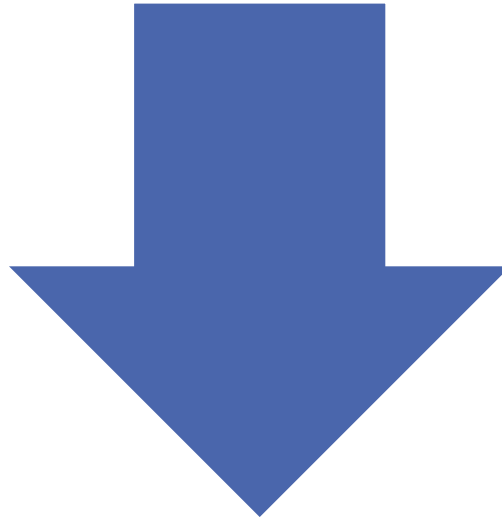
Research shows that  
Family-School-Community ties  
are a **KEY PILLAR** or an  
**ESSENTIAL SUPPORT** for  
school improvement



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



But research  
shows that at the  
critical transition  
to high school



School efforts to  
engage families  
tend to go down



- Middle school efforts at family engagement also fall behind those of elementary schools.
- Efforts to help students grow in responsibility should not be leaving families behind...

Family  
Engagement Is  
Critical  
Throughout  
Middle and  
High School



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





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



# FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS



## How can family engagement in high school lead to improved student outcomes?

- Monitoring of attendance, course assignments, and course grades
- Enrollment in appropriate courses to meet graduation and college entry requirements
- Information about college prep opportunities (AP coursework, dual enrollment, etc.)
- Understanding of key steps for preparing for college and college application process
- Information about career-oriented courses and programs



# The Goal

How can district family engagement leaders help middle and high schools improve their work in family engagement so that more middle and high school students enjoy success?

# 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.



# Keys to Effective Family Engagement Leadership for Middle and High Schools



## Key Roles of District Family Engagement Leaders

- ❖ Build community among school teams through a day-long workshop and several cluster meetings throughout the year
- ❖ Provide guidance through group meetings and individualized coaching with school leaders/teams around:
  - ❖ Planning
  - ❖ Implementing family engagement strategies and practices
  - ❖ Reflection and evaluation to improve practice
- ❖ Share research-based practices and resources through e-briefs and web-based sharing platforms as well as face to face
- ❖ Encourage school teams to share their learning and experience with each other

# Keys to Effective Family Engagement



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



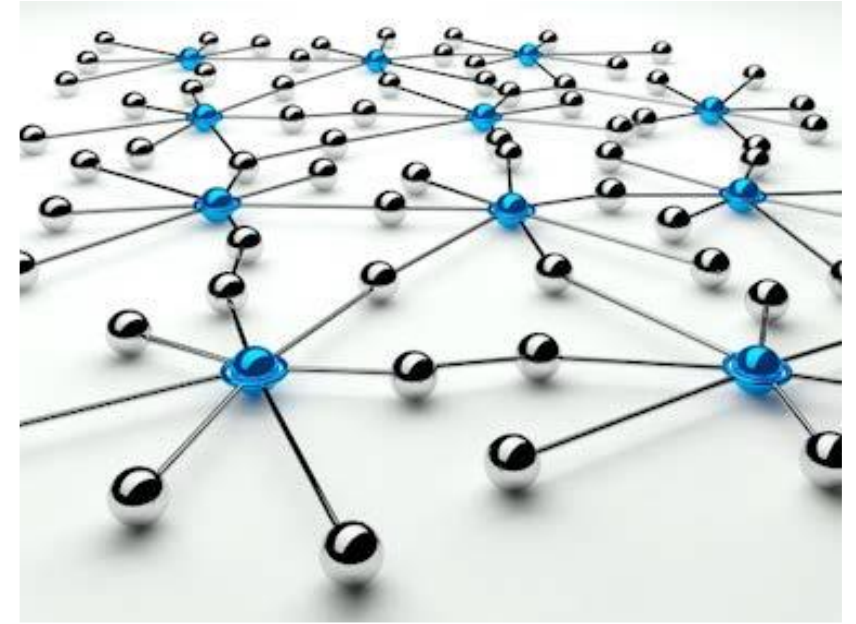
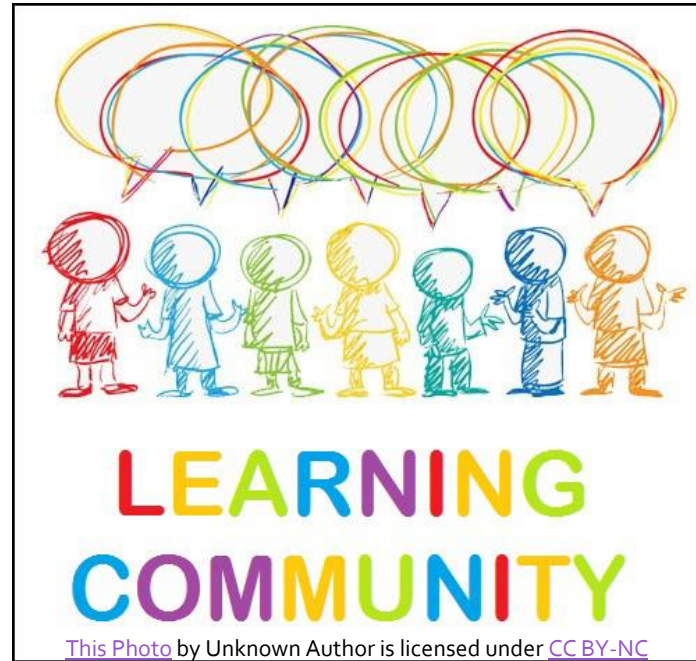
## What Kinds of Support Do School Family Engagement Teams Need?

### **School leaders and teams need guidance around:**

- planning for high school transition (including coordination with feeder schools)
- planning for family engagement across the high school years
- the importance of teamwork, and how to make it work
- best practices
- resources and templates (so that each school does not have to re-invent the wheel)
- reflection and evaluation for continuous improvement



# Build a Learning Community of Leaders and Teams from Middle and High Schools



Bring school teams together for a FULL DAY WORKSHOP and at least two other afternoon meetings during the year to learn together and share their practices

# Full-Day Training Workshop Should Include:

- Collaboration among teams that include parents and students as well as teachers, counselors, administrators, and other school staff
- Learning about research-based effective practices
- Sharing best practices in family engagement
- Discussion of effective teamwork
- At least 2 hours for reflection on previous work and constructing a plan for the year
- Fun!!



# Timing of Full-Day Workshop



vs.



- Need advance planning for the start of school - waiting until after fall means that important beginning of the school year family engagement activities are missed or not well-planned
  - Spring is a good time for team reflection about their past family engagement work
  - But many schools have trouble making time for attending a full-day spring workshop
- Fall workshops are better than no workshop at all.
  - Schools can still make good plans for the remainder of the year (though key family engagement times at the beginning of the year do not receive the thought and attention needed)



# District Family Engagement Leader as COACH

Provide guidance through group meetings and individualized coaching with school leaders/teams around:

- ❖ Planning
- ❖ Implementing family engagement strategies and practices
- ❖ Reflection and evaluation to improve practice



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# Family Engagement Coaching Strategies

- One district leader can coach 25-30 schools
- Check in with school team once a month by email or phone (personal visits especially good at beginning of year)
- Personally invite teams to larger group networking meetings and workshops
- Send regular e-briefs to share resources, ideas, and encouragement



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Beyond  
Random  
Acts of  
Family  
Engagement  
...

Schools need  
help in  
developing a  
**SYSTEMATIC  
PLAN**  
linking family  
engagement  
to desired  
student  
outcomes





# Why do we need to help schools make 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 can  
help schools  
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)?	
Organize and schedule family and community involvement activities to support THIS goal.			
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.			

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

GOAL – <span style="float: right;">Available In Resources Folder</span>			
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>			
<b>ACTIVITIES</b> (2 or more, continuing or new)	<b>TIMELINE</b> and <b>KEY DATES</b>	<b>WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE FOR EACH ACTIVITY &amp; WHEN?</b>	<b>HOW ACTIVITY</b> <b>ADDRESSES STUDENT</b> <b>PERFORMANCE</b> <b>GOALS</b>
Note if funds, supplies, and/or resources are needed for these activities?			
Add pages to outline more activities that support THIS goal.			



## What makes for a good plan?

### A good plan:

- Links family engagement activities directly to student outcome goals
- Includes a plan for analyzing outcomes
- Addresses critical issues – like the high school transition
- Specifies action steps and timelines

# Example Middle School Plan Component focused on 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Families

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

<b>GOAL</b> <span style="color: red;">Reduce 9<sup>th</sup> grade course failure by 10% for current 8<sup>th</sup> graders at our MS</span>			
<b>Chair or Co-Chairs:</b> _____			
<b>Desired result(s) for THIS goal:</b> <span style="color: red;">More 8<sup>th</sup> graders go on to succeed in 9<sup>th</sup> grade</span>		<b>How will the school measure the result(s)?</b> <span style="color: red;">District reports</span>	
<b>Organize and schedule family and community involvement activities to support THIS goal.</b>			
<b>ACTIVITIES</b> (2 or more, continuing or new)	<b>TIMELINE</b> and <b>KEY DATES</b>	<b>WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE FOR EACH ACTIVITY &amp; WHEN?</b>	<b>HOW ACTIVITY</b> <b>ADDRESSES STUDENT</b> <b>PERFORMANCE</b> <b>GOALS</b>
Orientation for 8 <sup>th</sup> grade families about HS.		Work with receiving HS to plan presentations. Plan multiple ways to share info with families who cannot attend.	
Ensure all families understand online portal to monitor student progress		Parent portal workshop & information sent home in multiple ways. Training teachers in effective portal use.	
Use TIPS interactive homework To help families understand how to help students succeed		Work with 8 <sup>th</sup> grade teachers to use TIPS interactive homework	
<b>Note if funds, supplies, and/or resources are needed for these activities?</b>			
Add pages to outline more activities that support THIS goal.			

# Grade 8 Family Engagement Plan

Focuses on helping families prepare for high school transition.

Includes multiple components to engage families in different ways:

- High School Information Night(s)  
Interactive presentation of information and listening to parents' concerns and questions – done in collaboration with receiving high school
- Focused training on use of parent portal
- Use of interactive homework activities to promote discussions between student and family and reach those who cannot attend meetings

See Middle School Handbook for more specific information on these activities

# Example HS Plan Component Focused on 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Families

## 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	
Note if funds, supplies, and/or resources are needed for these activities?			
Add pages to outline more activities that support THIS goal.			



# Grade 9 Family Engagement Plan

Focuses on helping families support 9<sup>th</sup> grade success.

Includes multiple components to engage families in different ways:

- High School Information/Orientation Night(s)  
Interactive presentation of information and listening to parents' concerns and questions – done in collaboration with sending middle schools
- Focused outreach/training on use of parent portal
- Systematic plan to monitor low grades and intervene with students and families in time to turn around poor performance and earn passing grade (course credit).

See *High School Handbook* posted on website for more specific information on these activities

# Aids for Planning



## 2019-20 School Year

JULY						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

AUGUST						
			1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

SEPTEMBER						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

OCTOBER						
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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

NOVEMBER						
				1	2	
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

DECEMBER						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

JANUARY						
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26	27	28	29	30	31	

FEBRUARY						
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MARCH						
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29	30	31				

APRIL						
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MAY						
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

JUNE						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

# The Need for a Team





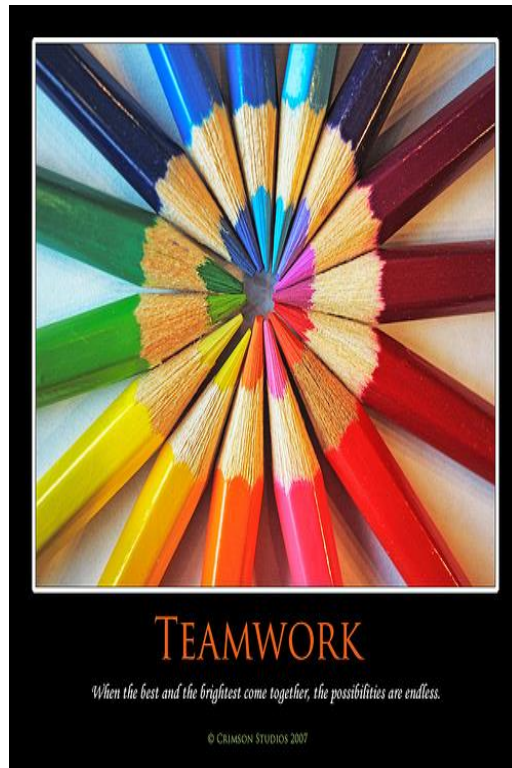


# Why do schools need a family engagement team?

- 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 teams?

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)



# Tools for Evaluation: School Level Tools and District Level Tools

School Name \_\_\_\_\_

School Year \_\_\_\_\_

**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 <small>How well was the activity planned?</small>	Support <small>How helpful were ATP members and others at the school?</small>	Implementation <small>How well was the activity implemented? Did it reach the target audience?</small>	Results <small>How well did the activity contribute to desired result(s) for Goal 1?</small>
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

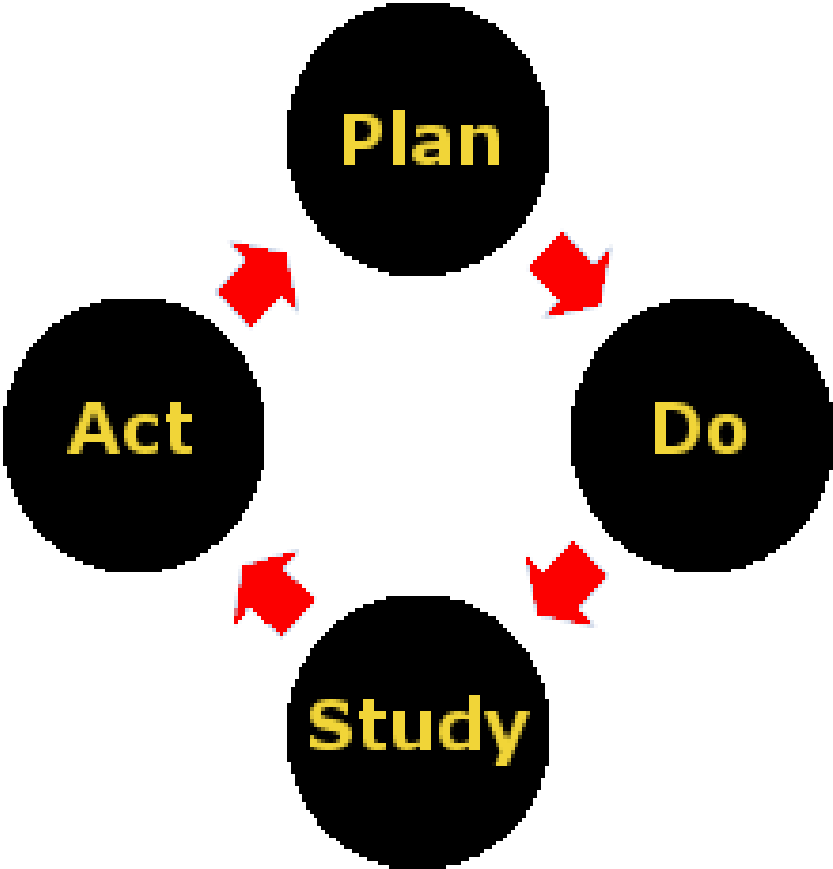
Name of school:

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)?

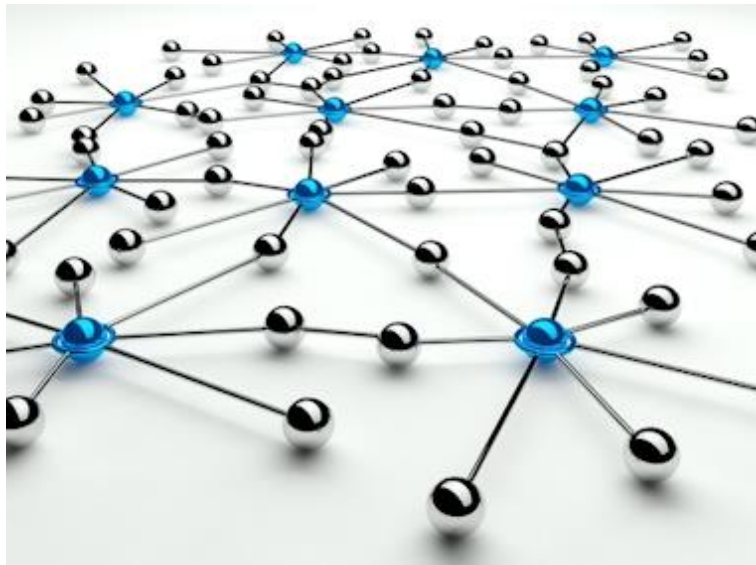
# Example of District Data Tracker for School-Level Family Engagement Activity

School	Attended workshop	Created Plan	Has a FE Team	Team meets monthly	Implemented monthly FE activities	Evidence of Self-Evaluation	Attended other network meetings	Add additional elements ...
School 1								
School 2								
School 3								
And so on...								

# Contact us to continue the conversation

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

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



## Additional family engagement resources available on:

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

### 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. The mini-handbooks contain guidance about using the posted tools and may be most useful to consult first.

[Access Resources](#)

#### School Team Resources

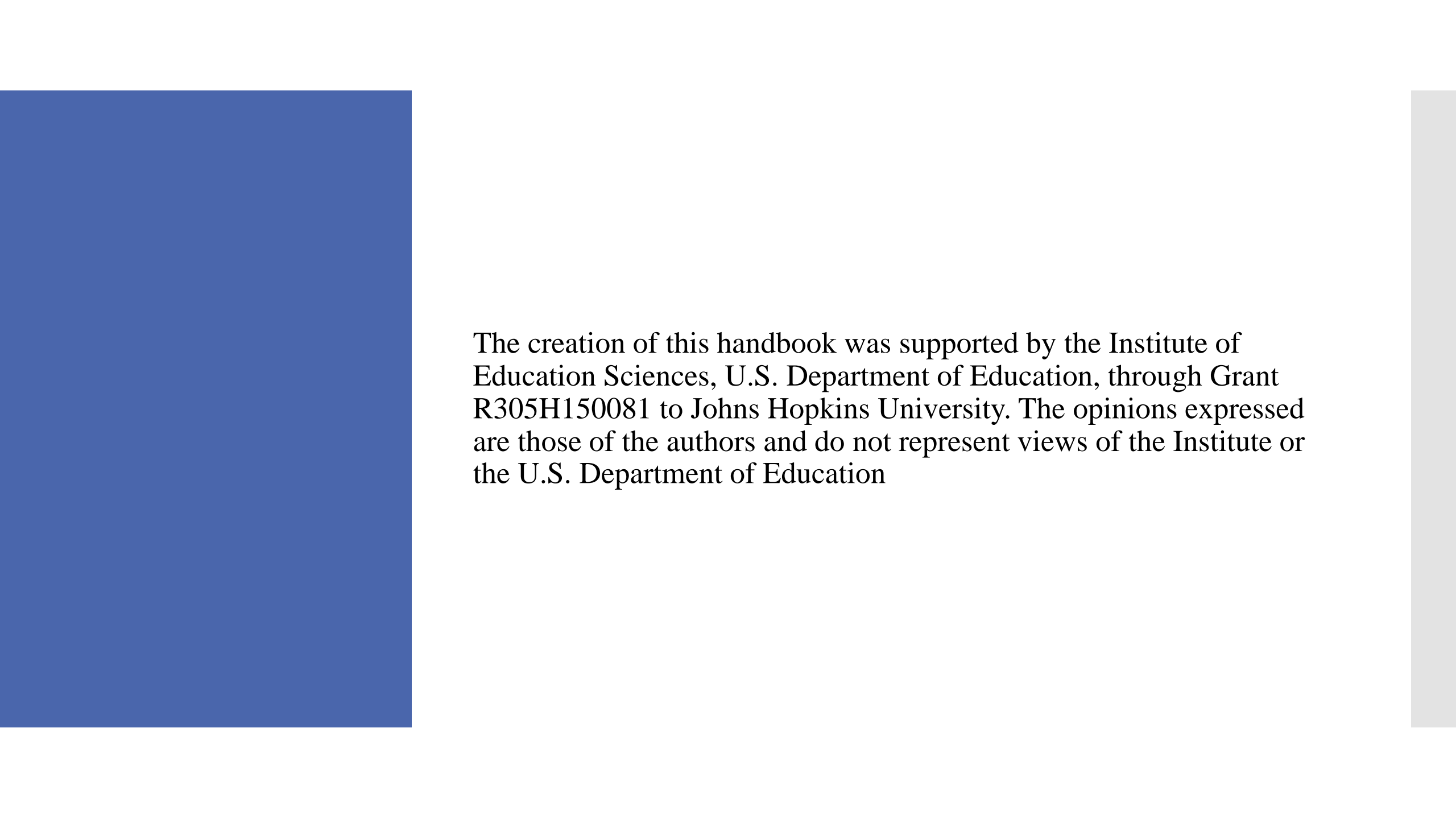
School team materials include tools for planning, implementing, and evaluating their family engagement work (particularly focused on the transition from grade 8 to grade 9). The mini-handbooks contain guidance about using the posted tools and may be most useful to consult first.

[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 to complete with a family member about the transition to high school. The mini-handbooks for district leaders and school teams contain guidance about using the posted tools and may be most useful to consult first.

[Access Resources](#)



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