SCHOOL / FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES* FOR RETURNING BACK TO SCHOOL IN FALL 2020:

TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Positive Relationships

Always

- Be involved as much as possible and meet people who work at the school.
- Be proactive and reach out to school staff to maintain communication.
- Help with school events and encourage all family members to participate.

- Check in with your child's teachers, administrators, etc., and ask how they have been handling the new semester.
- Ask the school staff if there is anything that you can do to help your child's school function effectively right now.
- Be positive and supportive when interacting with school staff.
- Communicate your appreciation after solving a problem.

Family Empowerment

Always

- Ask questions about navigating the school system and other aspects of education that impact your child's life.
- Talk to administrators about any concerns you have regarding your child's education.
- Search for resources that apply to you/your child's situation. You can also contact the school staff to ask for guidance.

- Connect with other parents/caregivers about any concerns you might have.
- Join support groups on social media.
- Include the student in the decision-making process.
- Check your child/teen's school website for updates regarding the COVID-19 situation.
- If you have any concerns about your child's safety, contact the school staff or administrators.

Leadership

Always

- Try to be involved with decision-making at the school (such as through the PTA and advisory committees)
- Inform the school of your perspective as a parent / caregiver.

- Pay attention to your child's progress and relay that information to their school.
- Sit with your child during their virtual classroom meetings if they need extra support.
- Offer to support the school administration in making key decisions now and throughout the year.

Data-Based Goals and Outcomes

Always

- Inform yourself about data and what it means. Understand that data helps schools to create meaningful goals.
- Take surveys to help implement change.
- Use data from those surveys to help schools to guide improvement.

- Keep up-to-date on the latest data surrounding COVID-19, and use this information to make decisions regarding your child's education plans.
- Ask for specifics on how students' academic and social/emotional progress will be monitored this school year.

Multi-Tiered / Multi-Dimensional

Always

- Try to meet with teachers face-to-face and follow-up with communication that is convenient for you and your family.
- Follow-up with school staff if they do not respond after your first message.

- Try to schedule some kind of meeting with the teachers, whether it is through a phone call, video call, or even in an appropriate socially distant setting.
- Ask the school for assistance with virtual meetings if need be.
- Ensure that your virtual messages are being understood by asking school staff to paraphrase the information.

Collaborative Problem Solving

Always

- Share information with the school that builds understanding, such as traumatic events or family situations.
- Make trusting connections at the school and work towards a shared goal of student success.

- Keep an open dialogue with your child's school about how your child is handling the COVID crisis, re-entering school, etc.
- Discuss any plans with the school staff for accommodations to meet the student's unique needs.
- If your child has intensive needs, request a routine check-in with the school staff to frequently discuss problems and solutions.

*Six key components guide family engagement in multitiered systems of supports. These six components are detailed in 2 sets of videos and accompanying fact sheets at:

https://tinyurl.com/y2swpjgm

SCHOOL / FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES* FOR RETURNING BACK TO SCHOOL IN FALL 2020:

TIPS FOR SCHOOL STAFF AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS

Family Empowerment

Always

- Ask families about which supports they need
- Treat families as experts on their children
- Give families the resources/tools to easily access school information

- Ask families about any additional supports that they might need right now.
- Let families them know that you are there for them if they have any questions or are in need of direction.
- Give families easily accessible resources in one document or email thread, so that they will be able to find everything in one place.

Positive Relationships

Always

- Build relationships with families to gain trust and insight on their situation.
- Be aware that each relationship is individual.
- Help families to see their impact on student success.
- Be positive and supportive when interacting with families.

- Continue to reach out to families through virtual means. Make sure that it is through a medium that works best for them.
- Send out surveys to assess how the student's family members are doing in terms of re-entering school.
- If possible, provide assistance when it comes to families meeting their basic needs. If this is not currently possible, inform families of other resources or organizations that could help.

Leadership

Always

- Encourage family engagement, cultural humility, and inclusive practices
- Drive change in school practices through leadership.
- Be involved with the school's community
- Train staff to improve family relationships

- Implement changes within the school system that have the desired impact.
- Maintain a positive but realistic attitude around school staff, students, and families.
- Understand that some families are and will continue to be disproportionately affected by the coronavirus. Keep this in mind while interacting with families as well as staff.

Data-Based Goals and Outcomes

Always

- Identify family engagement successes with data.
- Use data to assess needs and develop response goals.
- Send out surveys to assess family needs, student adjustment, attendance, academic success, late arrivals, etc.
- Send families
 frequent updates
 about their child's
 successes,
 strengths, struggles,
 etc.

Multi-Tiered / Multi-Dimensional

Always

- Be flexible about the location and timing of meetings, when possible.
- Be persistent in efforts to reach families.
- Enlist students to help encourage family visits to events.

- Find new ways to communicate with parents, such as through paper, phone, email, social media, etc.
- Ask families how they would like to be contacted.
- Ensure that families understand messages (as certain aspects of communication such as body language are currently out of the picture).

Collaborative Problem Solving

Always

- Invite family insights to better understand students and their home situations.
- Do not rush meetings.
- Be mindful of jargon that families may not know.
- Watch for signs of misunderstanding at meetings. Ask if the family understands the info or needs more clarification.
- Provide multiple options for families experiencing a problem.

- Encourage families right away to speak up if they need some more clarification at a meeting.
- Send summaries to families once a meeting is over so that they do not miss any crucial information.
- Periodically ask for the family's input regarding the process of re-entering school. Remain open to this feedback throughout the entire process.

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