



The Connecticut Department of Education developed foundational tenets to engage families. These evidence-based high leverage strategies are proven to effectively build strong school/family bonds.

- 1. Build collaborative, trusting relationships focused on learning.**  
For example: Offer getting-to-know-you meetings in smaller, informal settings. Make relationship-building home visits. Co-design with families a pre-school-elementary school transition program.
- 2. Listen to what families say about their children’s interests and challenges.** For example: Pay attention to different cultural perspectives and use families’ ideas to create programming, tailor instruction, improve discipline practices, design professional development, and recruit early learning providers, school leaders and staff.
- 3. Model high-quality learning practices.** For example: Share how families can engage children in interactive play, reading, and hands-on math activities that promote problem solving. Invite families to visit the after-school program, meet staff, and join the activities. Host “classroom visits” for families to see firsthand what their kids are doing in class and how the classroom is set up for learning.
- 4. Share information frequently with families about how their children are doing.** For example: Talk about the skills that will help children upon their transition to kindergarten and discuss children’s progress with families regularly. Explain your school or program’s high achievement goals and ask families about their ideas to help their kids reach them.
- 5. Talk with students about how they want teachers and families to support their learning.** For example: Include students’ ideas in Title I school-parent compacts, personal learning plans, and requests for professional learning. Respond to what students say about social and emotional issues. In middle and high school, set up an advisory system, so that all students have someone who knows them well and who can be their advocate in the school and the primary contact for their families.
- 6. Co-develop cultural competence among staff and families.**  
For example: Build students’ home cultures into programming and curriculum. Invite families and early learning providers/teachers/ community learning program staff to share their cultural and family traditions. Showcase the diversity in your early learning setting, school, or after-school program.
- 7. Support parents to become effective leaders and advocates for children.** For example: Collaborate with initiatives that develop parents’ knowledge and skills to become civic leaders and problem-solvers. Provide information about how the education system works, from early childhood to higher education, and how to advocate for their children’s needs and opportunities within that system.

[Source](#)



Below are charts of high leverage family engagement strategies developed by the Connecticut State Education Department. These charts provide a way for you to assess the types of activities the school is using and determine their impact. [Source](#)

## EARLY CHILDHOOD

Higher Impact on student learning and development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
1. Families and childcare providers do neighborhood walks to meet prospective families and hand out program information, books, and growth charts.	Springtime open house for new families, hosted by current families.	Preschool registration on the program website or drop in.
2. <b>Family-to-Family Learning!</b> Pre-K families share family engagement strategies with new families in familiar neighborhood settings and sign them up for things like Parent Teacher Home Visits, Ready4K, and Community Café. Short videos of families' sharing are sent with texts or emails to families who couldn't attend, with sign-up sheets and surveys attached.	Family Night. Families visit classrooms, meet teachers, view children's work, sign-up to volunteer, and receive a family phone tree compiled by staff.	Back to School Night. Families visit classrooms, meet teachers, and have refreshments.
3. A program communication app, like Class DOJO, creates two-way communication and ongoing exchange of knowledge between families and teachers	Monthly phone calls, emails, or texts with information on program activities.	Program newsletter with generic messaging.
4. Children take turns taking home The Book Bag (a book, a journal with family assignment, and colored pencils). When the Book Bag is returned after two nights, children share their experience and drawings during morning meetings.	Children pick a book to take home so their families can read aloud.	Families volunteer to read stories in the program.

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**EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Higher Impact on student learning and development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
<p><b>5.</b> During classroom observations, teachers model strategies to support specific learning at home. Families ask questions and practice strategies with each other then go home with a "tip sheet." Short videos modeling the strategies are sent with emails or texts to families who couldn't attend, and a list of the families' questions and teachers' answers are attached along with the tip sheet.</p>	<p>At evening meetings, staff share information regarding areas of child development with families and show how those areas are covered in the classroom.</p>	<p>Teachers send home written materials on developmental areas (e.g. social- emotional, motor, cognitive).</p>
<p><b>6. Parent Teacher Home Visits</b> twice a year. Teachers visit in the fall to launch relationships and in winter or spring to share information to support a smooth transition to kindergarten.</p>	<p><b>Parent-Teacher Conferences</b> twice a year, available evenings and on weekends.</p>	<p><b>Parent Teacher Conferences</b> by appointment during work days.</p>
<p><b>7. Monthly Community Cafés</b> Hosted by trained family members, parents take part in meaningful, guided conversations during which they support and learn from each other and collect input and feedback for the program.</p>	<p>Monthly breakfast gatherings for families and staff.</p>	<p>Families can visit the program site by appointment.</p>
<p><b>8. Community Café</b> participants have a voice in all major program decisions and develop and support parent-initiated projects.</p>	<p>Families can volunteer to meet with the program director or family care provider quarterly to share family feedback.</p>	<p>Suggestion box in the office/ provider's home.</p>



**ELEMENTARY**

Higher Impact on student learning and development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
<p><b>1.</b> Back to School Night class meetings where parents and teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Share learning strategies</li> <li>■ Review key skills for students with home learning tips</li> <li>■ Develop a communications plan</li> </ul>	<p>Open House</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Parents tour school, chat with teachers</li> <li>■ Classroom visits to meet teacher</li> <li>■ Exhibits of student work</li> </ul>	<p>Back to School night in the auditorium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Panel of speakers</li> <li>■ Pass out student handbooks</li> <li>■ Hand out school calendar</li> </ul>
<p><b>2.</b> Regular two-way calls/texts/emails to share progress and tips.</p>	<p>Positive personal phone calls home</p>	<p>Robocalls about school events</p>
<p><b>3.</b> A Family center, staffed, with workshops on learning strategies, referrals to social services, and informal gatherings.</p>	<p>Parent resource room with toys, games and books to borrow</p>	<p>School newsletters with generic messages</p>
<p><b>4.</b> Relationship-building home visits by teachers, voluntary for both teachers and families and available for all families.</p>	<p>Coffee with the principal; Muffins for Moms; Donuts with Dads</p>	<p>Potlucks, other traditional whole-school-based events</p>
<p><b>5.</b> Story quilting workshops and poetry slams where parents, teachers and students all tell their stories, share their work.</p>	<p>School book club and authors' tea featuring student writers</p>	<p>Student performances</p>

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**ELEMENTARY**

Higher Impact on student learning and development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
<p><b>6.</b> Classroom observations with mini-lessons; weekly data-sharing folders go home, with space for parent comments.</p>	<p>Interactive homework with tips for home learning</p>	<p>Curriculum nights</p>
<p><b>7.</b> Student-led conferences with portfolios of student work, followed by 1:1 conversations about learning, to set goals.</p>	<p>Parent-teacher conferences twice a year, available evenings and weekends</p>	<p>Parent-teacher conferences, during work day</p>
<p><b>8.</b> Tours of school led by students and community walks led by parents and custodians.</p>	<p>Monthly breakfasts for new families</p>	<p>Visit school by appointment</p>
<p><b>9.</b> School council has a voice in all major decisions; develops and supports parent-initiated projects.</p>	<p>Parent organization meets with principal to discuss suggestions</p>	<p>Suggestion box in office</p>
<p><b>10.</b> Candidate forum at Fun Fair; parents and students meet in advance, prepare to ask questions regarding issues affecting families.</p>	<p>Candidates for election invited to Fun Fair</p>	<p>Fall Fun Fair</p>
<p><b>11.</b> Parent leadership classes strengthen family capacity to navigate the system, be effective advocates, and take part in school councils and committees.</p>	<p>Adult learning evenings</p>	<p>Parenting classes</p>



## AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Higher Impact on student learning and development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
1. Afterschool classes are linked to the school curriculum. Teachers and program staff collaborate to track students' growth targets and keep families up to date.	A teacher from the school shares data with tutoring staff on student skills.	Staff informs families that the program offers tutoring on reading and math.
2. Frequent, informal gatherings for families, school staff, and community partners to foster collaboration and info-sharing.	Students perform and show their work at quarterly family nights.	Staff is available to talk with families on orientation day.
3. Staff and families co-develop intervention plans to address students' social and/or academic concerns.	Annual survey asks parents about students' experience with the program.	Tip sheets sent home on promoting student health and learning.
4. Regular meetings with families to discuss student progress, share information, and confer on strategies to support learning.	Children pick a book to take home so their families can read aloud.	Families volunteer to read stories in the program.
5. The after school program collaborates with other school-based and community programs to make the school a "hub" of activities for students, families and community members.	Program hosts information fairs about community resources and programs.	Community bulletin board posts notices about local happenings.

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## AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Higher Impact on student learning and development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
<p><b>6.</b> Family support groups and education classes promote family learning, develop job skills, and address health needs.</p>	<p>Staff refer families to GED and job training programs offered by community partners.</p>	<p>Families can sign up for the Volunteer Program.</p>
<p><b>7.</b> “Community advocates” develop rapport with families of children at risk, provide advice and links to extra support, and help families navigate social services.</p>	<p>Program staff receive extra pay to serve as informal advisors and mentors to students.</p>	<p>Staff refers struggling children to outside counseling programs.</p>
<p><b>8.</b> Local partners co-sponsor community-building and cultural events at after school sites, such as a Health Fair or Heritage Celebration, that attract hundreds of families and community members.</p>	<p>Families and staff plan special events to honor student success and celebrate the beginning and end of the school year.</p>	<p>Program offers fall and spring celebrations for students and families.</p>
<p><b>9.</b> In the Leadership institute, parents learn ways to foster their own and their children’s education, support their families financially, develop social networks, and advocate for high quality schools.</p>	<p>Program staff invite public officials to attend events, meet families and answer questions about community issues.</p>	<p>Program office displays flyers and brochures about community resources and learning opportunities.</p>



## MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

Higher Impact on student learning and development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
<p><b>1. Transition program</b> – events at feeder schools, tours of new school, 4-week HS prep summer course – welcomes families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convey college/career prep focus - your student will graduate in 4 years with college acceptance letter in hand</li> <li>Relate academic programs to careers</li> <li>Prepare students for high school work</li> <li>Help families construct their role in supporting their students' success</li> </ul>	<p>Fall Family Academy to orient incoming families to expectations of students, such as attendance requirements and credits needed for graduation.</p>	<p>At freshman orientation, parents can pick up their students' class schedules and bus passes and tour the school.</p>
<p><b>2. Workshops for families:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Courses needed to graduate and go to college/post-secondary education</li> <li>What high-level academic work looks like at each grade level</li> <li>Where to get needed help for students</li> <li>Tests, applications and timelines required for college</li> </ul>	<p>Staff conduct trainings for families to help them understand how to navigate the requirements of high school.</p>	<p>Information sheets about school programs and college resources available in the school office.</p>
<p><b>3. Advisory System:</b> Each student has an adult advisor who develops close relationships with families to co-design students' academic programs, set up regular communications, and serve as main contact.</p>	<p>Parent liaisons check in with parents about use of homework help and other resources for students.</p>	<p>Parents receive "early-bird" notices from school when their students fall behind.</p>

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## MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

Higher Impact on student learning and development	Moderate Impact	Lower Impact
<p><b>4. Monitoring progress:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Coursework sequence and college track requirements are clear and explicit</li> <li>■ Advisors keep parents current on student progress, with focus on students at risk</li> <li>■ Parents invited to exhibits of student work, where students present and critique their work</li> <li>■ Parents are reminded to check classroom websites for information on projects and student work</li> <li>■ Student-led conferences review portfolio of student work, supports needed to do their best work and stay on track</li> </ul>	<p>Parent liaisons help parents use the district's student performance tracking system. Teachers keep a record of students' "positive traits" to share in "good news" calls.</p>	<p>School contacts families when students are having a problem with academics or behavior.</p>
<p><b>5. College and career planning</b> begins early, a graduation plan is done by end of 9th grade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Parents invited to post-secondary education fairs</li> <li>■ Staff recruit parents to visit colleges</li> <li>■ Workshops for parents on PSAT, SAT, and ACT exams; offer help completing college applications and applying for financial aid</li> <li>■ Parents given guiding questions for discussing Student Success Plans with their student to reflect on successes, areas for growth and new goals</li> <li>■ Special assistance for undocumented families</li> </ul>	<p>College/Technical Program fair every fall, with focus on 11th and 12th graders. Parent liaisons and community partners reach out to invite families and remind them to review the Student Success Plan for their child.</p>	<p>Parents can make appointments to confer with guidance counselors, and receive a handout with information about how to review the Student Success Plan.</p>