

# The Effective Schools Framework Engages Families in Creating High-Performing Schools

The Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Strategic Priority 4 aims to improve low-performing schools across the state using well-designed approaches supported by evidence. Two of these initiatives are the Texas System of Great Schools and the [Effective Schools Framework](#) (ESF), which is described in this brief.

Texas Education Agency | Strategic Priority 4



The ESF was developed in conjunction with school and district leaders and informed by a national body of research about what makes high-performing schools excellent.<sup>1</sup> The framework provides a clear vision for what Texas districts and schools across the state need to do to ensure an excellent education for all students. The ESF model provides a well-structured approach that defines five Prioritized Levers essential to high-performing campuses: (1) Strong School Leadership and Planning, (2) Effective, Well-Supported Teachers, (3) Positive School Culture, (4) High-Quality Curriculum, and (5) Effective Instruction. Each lever is supported by district commitments and essential actions, as the following example for Prioritized Lever 3 illustrates for family involvement and engagement.

## TEA Effective Schools Framework – Prioritized Lever 3: Positive School Culture

**Description:** Positive school culture requires compelling and aligned vision, mission, goals and values; explicit behavioral expectations and management system; proactive and responsive student support services; and involved families and community.

### District Commitments:

The district provides campuses with best practice resources and tools for engaging families (i.e., translation services, parent/student surveys, online communication structures).

### 4. Involving families and community (Essential Action – School)

- The campus creates an inclusive and welcoming environment that engages all families in critical aspects of student learning.
- Systems are in place to engage families on a regular basis about their child's performance in a positive, constructive, and personalized way.
- Multiple communication strategies with families are integrated into teacher roles and responsibilities.
- Family and community engagement and impact data are reviewed regularly, and plans are adapted as needed.




Source: TEA Effective Schools Framework (8/1/2018)

The ESF approach strategically incorporates family engagement as an essential action needed to improve schools and expand great choices for students and families. School improvement approaches that implement high-quality family engagement practices in tandem with high-quality instruction have noted sustained gains in student learning. A study of high-poverty schools found gains in elementary students' reading and math scores when standard learning practices were combined with family outreach practices such as conducting regular teacher-family meetings, providing materials for families to use at home, and facilitating regular two-way communication.<sup>2</sup> Other high-impact strategies to engage families in school improvement efforts are strengthening family capacity to support student learning at home: helping families understand the purpose of data and how to use data to make decisions, and embedding family engagement into professional development and instructional goals.<sup>3</sup> Districts and schools across the country are also developing effective partnerships and collaboration among families, educators, and community to implement strategic family engagement programs that advance student learning such as academic parent-teacher teams, transition programs, and regular community conversations to learn about ideas for improving student learning and supporting families.<sup>4</sup>

Parent and school volunteer Olga Lucia Suarez encourages all parents to become involved at school. To start, she recommends asking for the family liaison. "Family liaisons are a great resource that we have in the [Klein ISD] schools and they are there to help you. I experienced that a year ago when I moved here; the family liaison was amazing, very welcoming, very open." Suarez has since become involved with English classes, Parent University, and family nights, and has learned about the education system, expectations, and what the school is teaching her children. Suarez says because of her presence at school, she has seen growth and increased confidence in her children, and her family has made new friends in school and the community. "It's much more than just a school," she says. "It's a life around us."

Olga Lucia Suarez, Parent and Volunteer, Klein Independent School District  
Member, Texas Council on Family-School Engagement

## Strategies and Actions High-Performing Schools Use to Increase Family Engagement

 Districts	 Schools/Educators	 Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Promote local family and stakeholder engagement</b> in creating and refining the mission, vision, and values at each campus.</li> <li>▶ <b>Provide campuses with resources, tools, and supports</b> that families need.</li> <li>▶ <b>Deploy family liaisons</b> for outreach and engaging families considered “hard to reach.”</li> <li>▶ <b>Fund family supports</b> such as translation and interpretation services, computer labs, and multilingual texting tools.</li> <li>▶ <b>Incorporate two-way communication strategies, expectations, and measures</b> into teacher practices.</li> <li>▶ <b>Provide training to administrators and educators</b> on how to effectively engage families in students’ learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Create an inclusive and welcoming campus</b> for all families in their school community.</li> <li>▶ <b>Establish regular and effective two-way communication with families</b> that addresses student’s progress, success, and needs.</li> <li>▶ <b>Build relationships</b> and work with families as partners in learning.</li> <li>▶ <b>Review family engagement impact data regularly and modify plans</b> to continuously strengthen family engagement in learning at school and at home.</li> <li>▶ <b>Create systems to regularly engage families in children’s learning</b> in a positive way, in school and out of school.</li> <li>▶ <b>Plan home visits, in coordination with families, upon key transitions</b> to improve understanding of what to expect in preschool, elementary school, and middle and high school.</li> <li>▶ <b>Provide family training</b> on expectations and standards for each grade level and resources and materials on how to help children improve study skills and learning in various academic subjects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Represent the school’s diversity and actively participate</b> in developing a shared vision of high standards for learning and behavior.</li> <li>▶ <b>Engage in decision-making processes</b> at district and campus level.</li> <li>▶ <b>Co-plan and host school events</b> through family volunteers to help create a welcoming school climate.</li> <li>▶ <b>Stay informed</b> about classroom policies, assignments, and how to support student’s work at home.</li> <li>▶ <b>Access tools</b> such as electronic grade systems to monitor student progress.</li> <li>▶ <b>Leverage community resources</b> to support children’s learning and development.</li> <li>▶ <b>Maintain regular communication with teachers</b> and share students’ strengths and needs.</li> <li>▶ <b>Request informal support at school activities</b> through family liaisons, such as peer support, language interpretation, and translated materials. (Formal meetings such as IEP and disciplinary meetings require certified interpreters.)</li> </ul>

### Family Engagement Tools and Resources

- ▶ Bringing Transformative Family Engagement to Scale: <http://vue.annenberginstitute.org/issues/44>
- ▶ Organizing Schools for Improvement: <https://qrisnetwork.org/sites/all/files/materials/OrganizingSchools.pdf>
- ▶ Engaging Families to Transform Education: [https://www.carnegie.org/media/filer\\_public/f8/78/f8784565-4bd6-4aa3-bd80-2b98fd43380e/parent-engagement-2018.pdf](https://www.carnegie.org/media/filer_public/f8/78/f8784565-4bd6-4aa3-bd80-2b98fd43380e/parent-engagement-2018.pdf)
- ▶ Family Engagement Toolkit—Continuous Improvement Through an Equity Lens: <https://www.wested.org/resources/family-engagement-toolkit/>

<sup>1</sup> Texas Education Agency. (2018, August 1). *Effective schools framework overview*. Retrieved from <https://texasessf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/TEA-Effective-Schools-Framework-Overview.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Henderson, A. (n.d.) *High-impact family engagement: A core strategy for school improvement*. Retrieved from <https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/High-Impact-Family-Engagement-A-Core-Strategy-for-School-Improvement.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Weiss, H. B., Lopez, E., & Rosenberg, H. (2010, December). *Beyond random acts: Family, school, and community engagement as an integral part of education reform*. Austin TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory and Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project. Retrieved from [https://www.sedl.org/connections/engagement\\_forum/beyond\\_random\\_acts.pdf](https://www.sedl.org/connections/engagement_forum/beyond_random_acts.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Henderson, A. (2011). *Family-school-community partnerships 2.0: Collaborative strategies to advance student learning*. Washington DC: National Education Association. Retrieved from <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Family-School-Community-Partnerships-2.0.pdf>