# Tenet 6 – Family and Community Engagement School Inventory

## Introduction

The Family and Community Engagement School Inventory was originally designed by Anne Henderson, Karen Mapp, Vivian Johnson, and Don Davies and published in their book *Beyond the Bake Sale*. The inventory is being included in the Needs Assessment process as a way for schools to determine whether certain systems designed to support Family and Community Engagement are present at the school. The exercise is designed for school leaders to consider how their school is organized to support the Family and Community Engagement. It is not necessarily expected that a school would have all of the indicators identified; however, the school’s response may be helpful for the school in determining the appropriate next steps to support Family and Community Engagement. Similarly, the existence of any of the indicators identified below does not guarantee that the practice is having an impact on improving the school’s ability to engage families and the communities**.**

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| **School Name:** |

## Part 1: Map Your School’s Parent – Teacher Contacts

1. Teachers, counselors, or advisors are expected to communicate with families:
   * When there is a problem (1)
   * At parent – teacher conferences (2)
   * At least once a month if the student is struggling (3)
   * At least once a month with every family (4)

Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. School – family communications tend to focus on:
   * Student problems and misbehavior (1)
   * General news about the class (2)
   * Progress in specific problem areas (3)
   * Overall student progress (4)

Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. When do parents and teachers have face–to–face contact (besides parent – teacher conferences)?
   * Some teachers attend PTA meetings and other events for families (1)
   * All teachers attend at least one family-oriented activity each semester (2)
   * Teachers greet families before and after school (3)
   * Teachers routinely meet one-on-one or in small groups with families (4)

Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. How often do teachers send home materials that will help parents work with their children, such as learning kits or interactive homework assignments?
   * Rarely (1)
   * Maybe once a month (2)
   * It varies by teacher (3)
   * Every week (4)

Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. How is student work shared with parents?
   * Our school displays the work of top students only (1)
   * Parents can come to school and see work on the bulletin boards (2)
   * Teachers send home student work about once a month (3)
   * Student work goes home every week; parents and teachers comment on progress (4)

Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Add up your score. Give yourself a point of extra credit for each “other” response that moves your school toward open communications with families. The higher the number, the more communications with families are open and trusting. If your score is 10 or below, this would suggest that the school needs to develop a plan to open up communication with families.

## Part 2: How Family – Friendly is Your School?

**For each best practice listed, place an X under the category that best describes where your school is in relation to the best practice indicated.**

**Terms used:**

“*Already Established*” – this has been in place for at least six months and the desired results are occurring

“*Just getting started/still refining*” – this was either put in place within the past six months or has been in place for longer but has not resulted in changes occurring that were expected

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|  | Doing this | | | | | Not doing this | | | |
| Already established | | Just getting started | | | Could do this easily | | This will take time | This will be difficult |
| Welcoming Environment | | | | | | | | | |
| Friendly signs inside and out welcome families and visitors and explain how to get around the building. |  | |  | | |  | |  |  |
| The school has standards of welcoming behavior that apply to all staff, including bus drivers, security guards, custodians and cafeteria workers. |  | |  | | |  | |  |  |
| Front office staff are friendly – recognize visitors right away, provide information easily, and answer the phone in a way that makes people glad they have called. |  | |  | | |  | |  |  |
| There is a comfortable family resource room stocked with books, games, and educational information that families can borrow and where parents can meet. |  | |  | | |  | |  |  |
| Programs and Activities to Engage Families in Improving Student Achievement | | | | | | | | | |
| Current student work is displayed throughout the building. Exhibits clearly explain the purpose of the work and the high standards it is to meet. |  | |  | |  | | |  |  |
| All programs and activities for families focus on student achievement – they help families understand what their children are learning and promote high standards. |  | |  | |  | | |  |  |
| Special workshops, learning kits, and other activities show families how to help their children at home – and respond to what families say they want to know about. |  | |  | |  | | |  |  |
| The school reports to parents about student progress and how teachers, parents, and community members can work together to make improvements. |  | |  | |  | | |  |  |
| Strong Relationships Between Teachers and Families | | | | | | | | | |
| A “joining process” welcomes families to the school, offers tours, makes bilingual speakers available, and introduces them to staff and other families. |  |  | |  | | |  | |  |
| Teachers and families have frequent opportunities to meet face-to-face and get to know each other-class meetings, breakfasts, home visits, class observations. |  |  | |  | | |  | |  |
| Teachers or advisors make personal contact with each family at least once a month. |  |  | |  | | |  | |  |
| A family liaison helps teachers connect to families and bridge barriers of language and culture. |  |  | |  | | |  | |  |

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|  | Doing this | | Not doing this | | |
| Already established | Just getting started | Could do this easily | This will take time | This will be difficult |
| **Developing Families’ Self-Confidence and Power** | | | | | |
| Families are involved in planning how they would like to be involved at the school. |  |  |  |  |  |
| School committees and the PTA/PTO reflect the diversity of the school community and actively recruit and welcome families from all backgrounds. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The school is open and accessible-it is easy for parents to meet with the principal, talk to teachers and counselors, and bring up issues or concerns. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Parents develop school improvement projects and do action research-survey other families, observe in classrooms, review materials, and visit other schools and programs. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Programs and Activities to Engage Families in Improving Student Achievement | | | | | |
| Families learn how the school system works and how to be an effective advocate for their child. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Teachers learn about effective approaches to working with families of diverse cultural backgrounds. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Families and staff have opportunities to learn together how to collaborate to improve student achievement. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The school reaches out to identify and draw in local community resources that can assist staff and families. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Families learn how the school system works and how to be an effective advocate for their child. |  |  |  |  |  |

Which areas are you doing well in? Which ones will need more work?

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How are parents involved in making the school open, welcoming, and collaborative?

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What are your concerns?

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***Reflection:*** What steps could you take to help your school become more family-friendly?

Right away:

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Over the long term:

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## Part 3: How Closely Is Your School’s Parent Involvement Program Linked to Student Learning?

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|  | Doing this | | Not doing this | | |
| Already established | Just getting started | Could do this easily | This will take time | This will be difficult |
| **Learning What Students Are Doing in Class** | | | | | |
| Student work is posted in school hallways and in public places in the community and is rotated often. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Exhibits of student work show how to recognize high-level work at different grade levels. The assignments are challenging and the student work is not all the same. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Families can regularly observe in the classroom and/or see teaching demonstrations. |  |  |  |  |  |
| At parent-teacher conferences, students are present and discuss the quality of their work. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Informative School Communications** | | | | | |
| Articles in the school newsletter and on the website discuss what students are doing in class and include tips on helping at home. |  |  |  |  |  |
| A regular feature describes interesting approaches that teachers are using in class. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The articles use data about the school, such as attendance rates and test results, and describe how the school is working to make improvements. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The school offers regular workshops and other information sessions that help families understand how children learn and are being taught. The topics are suggested by families. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Families regularly receive information and materials to help their children at home |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Using Student Achievement Data to Design Programs** | | | | | |
| Programs and activities for families are focused on skills and subjects that students need to strengthen |  |  |  |  |  |
| Student achievement data are shared with families in ways that solicit their ideas about how to improve achievement. |  |  |  |  |  |
| School staff and parents collaborate to collect other data about learning opportunities for students, such as community programs and resources |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Collaborating with Community Learning Programs** | | | | | |
| School staff collaborate with community-based after-school programs and exchange ideas and information with program staff. |  |  |  |  |  |
| School shares curriculum, textbooks, assignments, and learning materials with community after-school programs. |  |  |  |  |  |
| After-school program staff can attend professional development at school. Staff development is also open to parents |  |  |  |  |  |
| Parents develop school improvement projects and do action research-survey other families, observe in classrooms, review materials, and visit other schools and programs. |  |  |  |  |  |

Which areas do you want to focus on first?

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How are parents and the parent organization involved in linking family involvement activities and programs to improving student achievement?

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What are your concerns?

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***Reflection:*** What steps could you take to help your programs be better linked to learning?

Right away:

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Over the long term:

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## Part 4: How Well is Your School Bridging Racial, Class, and Cultural Differences?

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|  | Doing this | | Not doing this | | |
| Already established | Just getting started | Could do this easily | This will take time | This will be difficult |
| Promoting Understanding of Different Cultures | | | | | |
| The school’s racial and cultural diversity is recognized and open discussed in a constructive way at parent group and faculty meetings, school council meetings, and discussion groups that include staff and families. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The school’s curriculum reflects cultures of families, and there are books and materials about families’ cultures in classrooms and the library/media center. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Families’ cultural traditions, values, and practices are discussed in class. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Activities and events honor all the cultures in the school. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Recognizing and Addressing Class and Language Differences | | | | | |
| The PTA/PTO is not dominated by any one group of parents, and its officers reflect the school’s diversity. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Extra efforts are made to recruit and welcome all families, and families of all backgrounds are involved at the school. |  |  |  |  |  |
| School activities and events are planned with parents and respond to their interests. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Interpreters are available for all meetings and events, and report cards, newsletters, signs, and other communications are translated into the school’s major languages. |  |  |  |  |  |
| English-speaking staff and families make an effort to mix with families who speak other languages. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Addressing Issues of Race and Racism | | | | | |
| School staff and families use books and stories about different groups’ experiences, including African Americans, to stimulate discussions about their own backgrounds and values. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Teachers and other staff use “teachable moments” and stories from local media to comment on and discuss racially motivated incidents. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Professional development for staff explores negative attitudes, practices and expectations for students of color, and aims to create high standards, rigorous practice, and increased expectations for all students. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Welcoming and Respecting All Families | | | | | |
| Parents and teachers are surveyed about school climate, and school staff and parent group leaders follow up on the results. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The school has a system for helping staff and students learn how to pronounce all students’ first and last names correctly. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Front office staff are warm and welcoming to all families and visitors and compliment family members on their contributions. |  |  |  |  |  |

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|  | Doing this | | Not doing this | | |
| Already established | Just getting started | Could do this easily | This will take time | This will be difficult |
| Addressing Issues of Race and Racism | | | | | |
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Which areas are you doing well in? Which ones do you want to focus on improving first?

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How are parents and the parent organization involved in addressing differences?

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What are your concerns?

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***Reflection:*** What steps could you take to address differences of culture, race, and class?

Right away:

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Over the long term:

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## Part 5: How Well Does Your School Support Parents as Advocates?

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|  | Doing this | | Not doing this | | |
| Already established | Just getting started | Could do this easily | This will take time | This will be difficult |
| Conferring with Teachers | | | | | |
| Teachers contact each family at least once a month with an update on their child and send graded student work home for review once a week. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Parents can easily contact teachers and other staff with information and questions about their children. |  |  |  |  |  |
| If your school is a middle or high school, each family knows an adult in the school they can contact about their child. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Supporting Advocacy | | | | | |
| At workshops and other information sessions, parents learn how to ask the right questions about their children’s progress and placement. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The school confers with families about which program is best for their children and gives them the information they need to make the best choice. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The school actively recruits students for gifted and advanced programs and works with families to explain the program and obtain their support. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Parents are part of the decision-making process about student placement in these programs. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Counselors and teachers refer families to education and recreation programs in the community that can help their children. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Transition Programs | | | | | |
| The school makes personal contact with all new families before the school year begins. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Teachers and students visit preschool programs and feeder schools to talk about the school and answer questions. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Special events for students and families welcome them to the school, give them a tour of the building, and connect them to “buddies” or mentors. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Planning for the Future | | | | | |
| If your school is an elementary school, school staff ask families about their goals for their children and discusses how the school can prepare for that future. |  |  |  |  |  |
| If your school is a middle school, all sixth-grade parents get information about what courses are required for college or other postsecondary education and what students should take in middle school to qualify for those courses in high school. |  |  |  |  |  |
| If your school is a high school, all ninth-grade families get a college or career planning handbook that contains an individual graduation plan and explains all the steps for applying to college. It also lists what courses are required for college admission. |  |  |  |  |  |

Which areas are you doing well in? Which ones do will need more work?

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How are parents involved in your school to promote constructive advocacy?

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What are your concerns?

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***Reflection:*** What steps could you take to develop a program to support parents as advocates?

Right away:

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Over the long term:

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|  | Doing this | | Not doing this | | |
| Already established | Just getting started | Could do this easily | This will take time | This will be difficult |
| Consulting Families About Decisions | | | | | |
| The school has governance council that has a voice in all major decisions and that includes parent representatives elected by a broad base of parents. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Parents and community members sit on the principal selection committee. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The school does an annual survey of parents to get their ideas about programs and policies. The survey is co-designed and tallied by parents. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Building a Strong, Broad-Based Parent Organization | | | | | |
| The parent group is focused on improving achievement for all students. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Surveys and focus groups are some of the ways that the parent association reaches out to families, builds its membership, and draws out their ideas and concerns. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The PTA or parent organization invites the principal to report on student academic performance, review the school’s scores on the state test, and describe how the school plans to improve. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Supporting Advocacy | | | | | |
| Families can learn how to vote and get a voter registration form in the school office. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The school or parent group invites candidates for office to speak at the school and actively encourages and prepares parents to bring up their issues or concerns. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Parent Leadership and other training is offered, either by the school or by community groups in collaboration with the school. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Drawing on Community Resources | | | | | |
| The school works closely with local public libraries and takes families on field trips to get library cards and borrow books and media. |  |  |  |  |  |
| A family resource center, school social worker, and/or other staff help families make connections to social services such as a food bank, a medical clinic, or housing assistance. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The school taps local businesses and community institutions for technical services, job opportunities for families and students, reduced fees, tutoring and mentoring, and training. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Collaborating with Community Organizers | | | | | |
| Teachers and parents work with community organizers to research solutions to problems that families and students face, such as bullying, traffic hazards, and gang activity. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The school hosts “accountability sessions” with local elected officials, so that families can raise their concerns about public services, such as street lights, community policing, drug trafficking, or poor trash collection. |  |  |  |  |  |
| If community organizers raise issues like class size, teacher qualifications, achievement gaps, and crumbling facilities, the school is willing to work with them to make improvements. If community organizers have not approached the school, the school reaches out to them. |  |  |  |  |  |

## Part 6: How Well Is Your School Sharing Power and Practicing Democracy?

In which areas are you doing well? Which ones will need more work?

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In what ways does your school share power with parents and build their social and political connections?

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What are your concerns?

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***Reflection:*** What steps could you take to make your school a laboratory of democracy?

Right away:

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Over the long term:

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## Part 7: How Well Does Your District Support Family and Community Engagement?

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|  | Doing this | | Not doing this | | |
| Already established | Just getting started | Could do this easily | This will take time | This will be difficult |
| Family Engagement Policy | | | | | |
| The district has a strong policy that sets standards for what partnerships in schools should include and lays out a process for making sure that schools meet the standards. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Parent involvement is clearly defined and means more than parents’ being their children’s “first teachers.” |  |  |  |  |  |
| The policy commits the district to offer certain programs and opportunities for families, staff, and community members. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Parents have the right to observe in classrooms, attend faculty meetings, and take part in professional development. |  |  |  |  |  |
| High – Level Leadership | | | | | |
| The director of family and community engagement is an assistant or deputy superintendent and reports directly to the superintendent. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The director’s staff are full-time and can cover all schools in the district. They have the skills to offer professional development to schools on engaging families effectively. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Principals are required to have credentials and experience in engaging diverse families. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Schools with high levels of parent, family, and community involvement are recognized and rewarded. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Accountability | | | | | |
| All schools are required to appoint an action team of staff and parents who represent the school’s diversity to build and sustain parent involvement. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Principals are evaluated, in part, on how well the school engages families and community members and organizations. |  |  |  |  |  |
| An annual survey assesses families’ opinions of the school and what supports they need to become more involved. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The annual survey data are correlated with student outcome data (including test scores) to develop programs for families that are linked to student learning. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The district uses a walk-through process to help schools assess how family-friendly they are. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Drawing on Community Resources | | | | | |
| The school works closely with local public libraries and takes families on field trips to get library cards and borrow books and media. |  |  |  |  |  |
| A family resource center, school social worker, and/or other staff help families make connections to social services such as a food bank, a medical clinic, or housing assistance. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The school taps local businesses and community institutions for technical services, job opportunities for families and students, reduced fees, tutoring and mentoring, and training. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Support and Resources | | | | | |
| Professional development and technical assistance on all aspects of family and community engagement are available for administrators, teachers, and parents. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Funding to plan and carry out family involvement activities is built into the district budget. Family involvement is not dependent of discretionary grants or other “soft money.” |  |  |  |  |  |
| The district has a well-developed and easy-to-use website so that schools and families can contact staff, obtain important information, and download useful materials. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The district offers incentives, such as small action grants, to develop new programs and activities. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The district showcases best practice, such as at conferences where schools exhibit their programs and describe the results, and in publications and on the website. There are awards for schools and staff that have made the most progress. |  |  |  |  |  |

Which areas are you doing well? Which ones will need more work?

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How are parents and community members involved at the district level to promote effective family and community engagement?

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What are your concerns?

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***Reflection:*** What steps could you take to develop district-wide initiative?

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Over the long term:

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