

Nebraska School, Family and Community Engagement Framework

“Schools and districts implement best practices in student, family, and community engagement to enhance experiences and opportunities that are culturally inclusive and relevant for each student. Student success and engagement relies on positive partnerships and relationships to fundamentally improve the outcomes for each student, school, district, and community.”

Positive Partnerships, Relationships & Student Success AQuESTT Tenet approved by the NE State Board of Education.

School-Family-Community Engagement:

- Is a **shared responsibility** of families, schools, and communities where knowledge is exchanged
- Is **continuous across a child’s life** spanning from birth to young adulthood
- **Occurs in multiple settings** where children and youth learn before, during, and after the regular school day
- Focuses on **culturally respectful partnerships** that support student learning, at home, at school, and in the community (Allyson, culturally responsive educational environments)
- Builds, sustains, and grows **relationships that empower** students, families, and communities
- Recognizes the role families and the community play in **advocating** for educational equity, opportunity, and quality.

Partnerships and support services with local, state, and national organizations

Community partnerships are relationships that are mutually beneficial, collaborative in nature, and result in achieving identified goals of those involved. Partners can be found in all areas of the state, both rural and urban, and include local, regional, state and national entities from the public and nonprofit sectors. Authentic relationships between schools, families, and partners can be both formal and informal, involve two-way communication, a shared vision, and consider the culture and diversity of the community. Sustainable partnerships grow in strength over time and reflect the efforts and commitment of those involved, despite changes in individual participants and membership. Important outcomes of partnerships are academic growth, health and physical well-being, and social emotional learning of all Nebraska students.

Business and industry partnerships to enhance student outcomes and experiences

Business and industry partnerships enhance the education of young people and increase the capacity of local schools. When schools intentionally engage community members, agencies, organizations, and business and industry partnerships in meaningful ways they are able to provide opportunities that improve pre-K-12 student outcomes and experiences; to prepare students to meet the local needs for future employees, and to connect families to community resources.

- Business and industry partnerships can help students develop both academic and nonacademic competencies.
- Business and industry partnerships can help schools build social capital and create opportunities for young people while strengthening their communities.

- Business and industry partnerships can support families and ensure that students are ready and able to learn every day.

Active family engagement

“**Family engagement** is a family-centered, strength-based approach to establishing and maintaining relationships with families and accomplishing change together. (Children’s Bureau)”

“**Family engagement** in schools is defined as caretakers and school personnel working together at the classroom, local, and system level to support and improve the learning, development, and health of children and adolescents.

Family engagement in schools is a shared responsibility in which schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to **collaborating alongside** caretakers in meaningful ways, and the caretakers are committed to actively supporting their children’s and adolescents’ learning and development. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015))”

“Decades of research and experience underscore the importance and positive impact of ongoing and authentic engagement. Meaningful mechanisms for family and community engagement, led by welcoming and culturally informed teachers and school staff, can strengthen the school community, build positive relationships and school climate, and improve student outcomes on many measures, including attendance, discipline, and academic achievement. Families who are supported by the school to understand academic goals and strategies are better able to support student learning—both inside and outside of the classroom. Similarly, schools that are able to engage families and communities in meaningful ways benefit as the staff gain access to new and important funds of knowledge that can support teaching and learning efforts and deepen engagement and community-building efforts. The school system, for its part, gains important advocates, such as for deeper investments, as families and community members understand and support strategic goals and see themselves as vital partners in schools’ success.” (Community Schools Playbook)

Safe and welcoming school climate and culture

School climate is composed of multiple systems (i.e., individual relationships, classroom climate, family, community climate, and partnerships with state and local agencies) each contributing to the overall school environment. To create a welcoming culture, it is critical to include contexts outside of the school day such as, after/before school programs, extracurricular activities, conferences, and other school hosted events. Building and sustaining trusting relationships in schools, with families, and local communities helps create equitable school environments that are safe and positive which have significant impacts on emotional and educational outcomes.

All adults in the building play a critical role in creating welcoming environments for students and their families. To ensure continuity and fidelity, it is important to engage the school community in creating a school wide policy for welcoming environments. Additionally, a system for continued progress monitoring ensures informed decision making and identifying areas of need. It is important for students to perceive their school as just, fair, and safe. School safety is related to school climate in its role in violence prevention and creating a school environment conducive to emotional and educational outcomes for all students.

Families and students need to feel seen and safe at school and in the community and feel that their unique needs and experiences are recognized and validated. School environments are sensitive to the spectrum and intersectional needs of all student populations. Thus, they provide appropriate and differentiated interventions dependent on student progress and developmental level and recognize growth rather than deficits. School climate contributes to social emotional and academic well-being of all students. Maintaining a positive school climate increases teacher retention, increases academic success, and decreases problematic student behavior. Student and teacher relationships have consistently been identified as a protective factor for children who experienced adversity, but also has been found to increase student academic outcomes.

Student attendance

Promoting student success and equitable outcomes by supporting full engagement and participation of all students and families in schooling. Using a multi-tiered system of support helps promote the importance and benefits of regular attendance and a problem-solving method towards addressing absences. A holistic approach should be used to address the needs of the student and family utilizing school, family and community resources.

Families and students often face challenging situations which impact school attendance (such as a family crisis, domestic violence, mental health issues, job loss.) It is important to work closely with the family to address the student's unique needs to improve attendance. For example, a student who is working through mental health concerns may need to be referred to the Student Assistance Team or community resource for more intensive, targeted intervention.

- Student attendance requires addressing the needs of students who are not coming to school or are tardy.
- Chronic absence is defined by a student missing 10% or more time and membership of school. (Learn more at [Nebraska Department of Education](#) or [US Department of Education](#).)
- Chronic absences place a student at risk of not reading in the early grades, failing middle school classes, being off-track for graduation and potentially dropping out of high school.
- Chronic absence data is best used for positive problem solving and early intervention rather than punitive action.

Participation in Activities Outside the School Day

Out-of-school time programs are regularly scheduled, structured, and supervised activities where learning opportunities take place outside the school day. These age-appropriate programs can occur within a school or at a community-based site. Out-of-school time programs provide safe environments for youth and resources for families.

Out-of-school time programs deliver activities to promote positive youth development which may but are not limited to academic support, educational enrichment, cultural and social development, skill development, and career exploration. Out-of-school time programming can enhance the learning experience during the school day.

Out-of-school time programs act as the bridge between the school and family. Out-of-school time programming includes activities for and with family members.

The full working document is [available online](#). Please do not share the framework widely. It is not a public document.