

## Family Engagement and Secondary Transition: Collaboration & Preparation

Families and caregivers are essential partners when it comes to home-school collaboration. They are often students' first teachers and serve as experts who know them best. Educators who partner with families increase post-school success and outcomes for their students.

### Family Engagement and Secondary Transition

For many families, the transition process may seem complicated and overwhelming. But, educators can help families to understand the process. Start by explaining transition language in tangible ways that will lead to engagement.

#### Coordinated Set of Activities

Discuss how a coordinated set of activities means schools and families working together. The goal is to create a logical plan that helps students reach their postsecondary goals.

#### Results-Oriented

Explain how results-oriented refers to beginning with the end in mind. When planning, remind families of the importance of honoring students' voices. A student-centered approach helps everyone prepare the best path to achieve actual outcomes.

#### Academic and Functional Achievement

Provide families with information to reinforce academic and functional achievement. Invite them as partners to bolster student skills at home and in the community.

#### School to Post-School Activities

Offer students and families examples of school to post-school activities. Help them to see the future and to understand how it differs for each student. Introduce students and families to community agencies and the importance of interagency collaboration.

## Strategies to Collaborate with Families

### **Collaborate with families through consistent communication.**

Ensure family-centered connections. Regular contact with families can go a long way to building trusting partnerships. When communicating with families, take care to focus on students' strengths by sharing their successes and growth, as well as any information that families identify as important.

### **Collaborate with families through cultural sensitivity.**

Recognize and acknowledge the different perspectives and cultural backgrounds of your students' families and the role culture plays in making educational decisions. Families feel respected and valued when they receive opportunities to share their opinions, ask questions, or raise concerns openly.

### **Collaborate with families through involvement.**

Encourage family participation in all aspects of the transition process including transition assessment, career development, and postsecondary goals and activities. Empower families to learn about their role in the transition process by providing transition-related events, information, and resources.

## **Inclusive Engagement Practices**

Use inclusive practices to ensure successful partnerships. For example, embrace traditional and non-traditional families. Consider potential barriers when planning transition events and creating resources. Take time to reflect on transportation, language, and technology needs. Think about meeting times, childcare, and meals. Ask for anonymous feedback and take time to consider students and families who are not engaged. Preparation begins with planning that is inclusive of everyone's needs.

## **Indicators of Success**

What does successful engagement look like? The answer is simple. Families and students are equal partners in the decision-making process. Students are active participants in their meetings and advocate for their future. Communication is frequent and offered in many formats and languages. Families share their concerns and ask questions. Most of all, educators respect student interests and family values.

## **Conclusion**

Successful family engagement comes when schools and educators build positive relationships and empower families. In turn, collaboration and preparation in secondary transition will support successful student outcomes.