



Department of Education

# Family and Community Engagement

Charter Operator Toolkit | June 2026



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# Family Engagement

The addition of charter schools as a school choice option provides an opportunity for parents and families to have a more central role in their child's education. Family engagement plays a large part in creating a strong school and providing a high-quality education for the students. Developing this systematic partnership between the school and families should be a priority for school leaders. By engaging families, charter schools can create a supportive environment that enhances student learning and success. Planning for this in the pre-opening year will ensure that a collaborative culture is established from the beginning.

Effective family engagement is not just a check-the-box exercise; it is a centralized series of strategies that benefit individual students and whole schools. [These strategies not only benefit students but also improve teacher morale and school reputation.](#) School leaders should plan proactively to address the different obstacles and barriers faced by the families and provide various engagement opportunities. The department provides [parent and family engagement resources](#), and the [Planning for Family Engagement in the Charter School Life Cycle: A Toolkit for School Leaders](#) provides a structured framework for planning.

## Key Strategies

**Family Orientation:** Providing families with an opportunity to understand the mission and vision, the academic program, and non-academic aspects of the school before their child begins

- Set the expectation that families are partners in their child's education.
- Pair new parents with a current parent to answer questions and provide guidance.
- Provide a tour of the school prior to student attendance.

**Regular communication:** Ensuring parents can easily obtain updates on their child's academic development, school events, and significant announcements.

- Address language barriers by translating materials and providing translators.
- Use technology to make communication easier and more efficient.
- Have an open-door policy for parents to talk with school personnel or visit the school.
- Utilize home visits for high-needs or hard-to-reach parents.

**Parent-teacher conferences:** Providing a forum for meaningful conversations about students' academic progress and growth potential.

- Be willing to accommodate families' schedules.
- Provide multiple options for conferences (e.g., two or more dates and times, meeting at locations other than the school, etc.)
- Provide the schedule in advance.
- Communicate the expectation to attend and follow up with those families that do not.
- Give students an active role in the conference by being the facilitator.

**Family gatherings:** Organizing events like back-to-school evenings and cultural festivities to strengthen the school community.

- Ask families to share information and cooking from their country or culture.
- Offer musical performances that highlight a particular country or culture.
- Have specific days at school for families to attend breakfast or lunch with their child (e.g., Donuts with Dad, Muffins with Mom, Thanksgiving dinner, etc.
- Plan a talent/variety show for families to share their skills and gifts.

**Educational programs:** Offering programs for parents that focus on literacy strategies, communication, and understanding educational standards.

- Provide training to families on how to support their child.
- Establish a family center that can be used for meetings and provide parents with access to resources they can use at home.
- Provide incentives for attending programs such as providing food or giving away prizes.

**Regular input:** Encouraging parents to contribute their thoughts on school operations.

- Encourage active family groups.
- Establish advisory councils focused on specific areas such as outreach, facilities, after-school activities, etc.
- Conduct surveys to gather input on specific topics.
- Have a suggestion box, which can be a physical box in clear view when parents come into the school and/or an electronic box accessed on the website.

**Resources and Support:** Providing “wrap around” services to address parent and student needs.

- Provide discussions around relevant family needs such as parenting techniques, applying for a job, qualifying for benefits, etc.
- Establish a family coordinator to assist parents in accessing needed services.
- Have materials available on relevant community supports.

## Community Involvement

Charter schools are integral parts of their communities, and a commitment to community involvement can serve to strengthen those communities. This emphasis can teach the value of service, collaboration, and positive impact.

Community involvement has a dual role: school involvement in the community and community involvement in the school. Both should be strategically planned during the pre-opening year or earlier. Conducting a needs assessment and resource mapping are good ways to begin planning for this important partnership. The following are ways in which the two can work together to support students and communities.

- Establish a community working group to advise on topics such as out-of-school-time programming or needed services.
- Identify businesses, organizations, and institutions that can offer project-based learning, apprenticeships, or internships for students.
- Invite subject matter experts from the community to the classroom to connect content to the real world.
- Participate in social or cultural events to network with people in the community with which a partnership could be developed.
- Get students involved in community service and local projects.

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