



## All staff handout

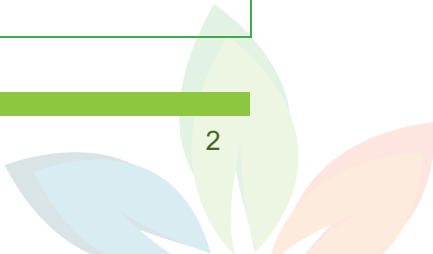
# 8. Strategies for Collaboration

Trauma-sensitive schools foster collaboration with students and families by using strategies that support their control and empowerment, such as speaking respectfully, ensuring that families and students understand what is happening and can give their opinions, and involving families as partners in decision making related to student needs and plans. At a broader level, school leaders develop formal mechanisms for monitoring the level of engagement and partnership with students and their families.

Use this handout to learn strategies for collaborating with students and families that align with core principles of a trauma-sensitive approach.

<b>Understand Trauma and Its Impact</b>
Consider types of potentially traumatic events that students, families, and the broader community may have experienced.
Identify the unique experiences and risk for trauma among particular groups of students and families (e.g., LGBTQ youth and their families, youth and families of color, American Indian and Alaskan Native students and families).
Recognize the potentially traumatic experiences that students and families may have had within the education system.
Educate all staff on trauma and its effects on students and families.
Be aware of how experiences of trauma may affect student and family engagement.
Provide education to students and families about trauma and its effects.
Be aware of potential trauma-related triggers and responses for students and families.
Minimize potential trauma-related triggers in the school environment and in interactions with students and families.
Include students and families in schoolwide efforts related to trauma sensitivity (e.g., work groups, feedback surveys).
<b>Believe Healing Happens in Relationships</b>
Build trusting relationships with students and families.
Maintain clear and respectful boundaries with students and families.
Demonstrate a commitment to maintaining positive relationships with students and families, even during difficult interactions or times of crisis.
Model healthy interactions with and for students and their families.
Facilitate positive connections between students and staff.
Provide skill building that fosters healthy relationships.
Promote student and family connection to the larger school community.

<b>Support Choice, Control, and Empowerment</b>
Be flexible and offer choice when scheduling meetings with families.
Ensure families understand why they are being contacted and what to expect when scheduling meetings.
Ensure students and families have the opportunity to offer their perspective and opinions during meetings.
Consider how to conduct meetings in trauma-sensitive ways (who leads, how the room is arranged, what signals are given regarding whether student and family voice is valued).
Support student and family control and choice during all interactions.
Focus on student and family skills and strengths.
Empower families to be advocates for their children.
Include students and families as partners in all decision making related to student plans and services (e.g., use family group or team decision-making approaches).
Set mutually satisfactory goals.
Make data on student progress easily accessible and understandable to families.
Involve students and families in creating policies, practices, and programs.
<b>Ensure Emotional and Physical Safety</b>
Welcome all families into the school.
Ensure the physical environment is safe for students and families.
Make sure the physical environment reflects the students and families in the school community.
Conduct family meetings in ways that support a sense of physical and emotional safety.
Create an environment where students and families feel valued and connected.
Be consistent, reliable, open, and honest with students and families.
<b>Strive for Cultural Competence</b>
Learn about families' backgrounds, cultures, and goals for their children.
Provide staff with resources and training to integrate culturally aware family engagement practices.
Use a cultural insider to help bridge cultural gaps in communication.
Create opportunities for students and families to share their stories.
Educate staff members about the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students and families.
Consider cultural factors when meeting with families (e.g., how to greet, what topics may be difficult to address, cultural norms, values, practices, and experiences with the education system).
Ensure an assessment process that engages students and families through varied lenses, including family strengths, capacities, cultural heritage, and extended family resources.
Verbal and written information is shared and discussed with families in their preferred language.
<b>View Students Holistically</b>
Understand the relationship between school, family, and community factors and student health and well-being.
Incorporate strategies for understanding and coping with trauma into activities with students and families.



Incorporate social and emotional skill building into daily routines and curricula.
Educate families about social and emotional skills development and how they can support their children in developing these skills.
Ensure students and families have access to mental health education and services.
Identify and cultivate student strengths and interests in academic and nonacademic areas.
<b>Use a Collaborative Approach</b>
Create regular opportunities to mutually share information about a child's learning and development.
Ensure constant two-way communication and collaboration between families and school staff.
Work with families in constructing goals, monitoring progress, and supporting learning.
Encourage family involvement in the school.
Offer opportunities for families to receive leadership training, coaching, or mentoring to enhance their leadership and advocacy skills.
Include families as partners in school organizations, advisory panels, and committees.
Offer families opportunities to visit their children's schools and find ways to recruit and train family members to work in the schools.
Collect ongoing feedback from students and families about their experiences of collaboration with the school.
Link students and families to trauma-related resources in the school and community when needed.
Provide or connect families to community supports (e.g., connections to parenting programs; education and services on relevant topics, such as child development, violence, and mental health).
Support family connections (e.g., provide parent partner, peer, parent support programs or opportunities).
Identify and work to remove potential barriers to parent participation.
Provide student and family engagement training for staff (e.g., helping parents understand child data; informing parents of their rights; giving parent feedback on child needs; helping families support learning at home; promoting child development, learning, and wellness).
Integrate core competencies related to student and family engagement into existing competency frameworks.
Develop formal processes for continuous improvement related to student and family engagement (e.g., family satisfaction, assessments of quality of relationships, discussion of screenings and assessments, number of professional development activities with family engagement focus, changes in family engagement practices).

## References

- National Education Association. (2008). Parent, family, community involvement in education. Retrieved from [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB11\\_ParentInvolvement08.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB11_ParentInvolvement08.pdf)
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