



National Standards *for* **FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS**

What are the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships?

PTA's [National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#) set the bar for how schools and parent organizations should work together to support student success. We know that families are essential partners to providing a high-quality education for every student. Decades of research shows that family engagement matters for student success, students whose families are engaged are more likely to attend school, avoid discipline problems, achieve at higher levels and graduate. Family engagement also helps schools, research suggests it is equally as important as school leadership or a rigorous curriculum to predict school improvement.

Although there is consensus that family engagement matters, parents¹ and educators struggle to figure out how to engage with one another in ways that reach all families and have a positive impact on student success (Robinson & Harris, 2014). Since their initial creation over 20 years ago, the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships have contributed to greater awareness and capacity for improving family-school partnerships across the country and internationally.

The Standards are one of few recognizable and concrete guideposts for family engagement across the education system, complementing important work such as the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School-Community Partnerships. The National Standards for Family-School Partnerships have been used by PTAs, schools, districts, state education agencies, and the U.S. Department of Education for accountability and support for strong family engagement, including as the foundation for PTA's own Schools of Excellence program which supports over 300 local PTAs and their schools annually.

Who should use the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships?

The National Standards for Family-School Partnerships are designed for multiple audiences, but especially:

- ↘ School, district and state education leaders who wish to ensure that their family-school partnership efforts are adequately implemented, funded, and monitored
- ↘ PTA and other family and community leaders who want to know how to support and push their schools to better partner with the families in their communities
- ↘ Families, educators and youth who want to know what questions to ask and things to look for to find or help build a school with strong family-school partnerships
- ↘ Researchers who want to use an updated framework to explore the impacts and implementation of family-school partnerships
- ↘ Policymakers and private funders who want to invest in stronger communities through family-school partnerships

¹ We use the terms families, parents and caregivers interchangeably in this document, recognizing that schools and PTA efforts to engage families must reflect an inclusive approach to the full diversity of family structures that raise our children. This includes biological parents, kinship and adoptive families, as well as mentor-mentee relationships that act as guides, coaches and advocates for every child's educational experiences.

Help National PTA capture and share the story of how you are using the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships in policy or practice by emailing us at FamilyEngagement@PTA.org.

Why and how were the National-Standards for Family-School Partnerships updated?

The National Standards for Family-School Partnerships were last updated in 2008. Educational trends, community demographics, and the family engagement evidence base have changed dramatically since then. For example, the past decade has seen a growth in research around the science of learning and development, as well as more specific studies about parent-teacher communication and relationships. More so, the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered the ways that families, young people, and schools interact, and it has exacerbated opportunity gaps in and across communities.

Schools and PTAs are looking for guidance reflecting these and other changes. In 2021, National PTA's Center for Family Engagement—alongside a cadre of family and community leaders—began the process of updating the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships.

The goals for updating the Standards were to:

- Incorporate research and best practices since 2008
- Integrate the perspectives of families, educators, and youth, particularly those from historically marginalized communities
- Improve the usefulness of the Standards across the education system

Further Your Learning

You can find these additional resources on our webpage, [PTA.org/Standards](https://www.pta.org/Standards).

- Video clips featuring the voices of families and educators
- Rubrics and reflection questions to help you assess progress and action plan
- Related resources that connect you to research and best practices
- Action steps to help you put the Standards to practice
- Sample policies that states and districts can adopt
- Online training to illustrate and advocate for the Standards (members only)



The process of updating the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships was an iterative one that involved the input of over 600 individuals of PTA, including:

- PTA's national, state and local leaders via virtual listening sessions and a written survey
- Families, educators and young people via the Future of Family-School Grassroots PTA Partners and the Center for Family Engagement's Strategic Collaborators who held virtual and in-person listening sessions
- Researchers and thought leaders via an Expert Advisory Group that held virtual meetings
- State, district and school leaders via key informant interviews and a PTA practitioner focus group

At each stage of the process, these constituents shared more detailed input that then informed the next product and stage of feedback. In addition to this input, National PTA also conducted a scan of best practices, research and family-school partnership policies. As a result of these efforts, you will see:

- The same six Standards as before, with focused improvements at the goal and indicator levels
- A broadened vision of student success that recognizes the important ways that families and schools collaborate around student achievement and wellbeing
- More intentional emphasis on equity and inclusion, including guidance to help schools and PTAs partner with our increasingly diverse families
- Clearer guidance by role that more explicitly articulates how schools and PTAs foster strong family-school partnerships

How are the Standards organized?

National PTA identifies six Standards that can help schools, PTAs and school districts improve their family-school partnerships so that all students can thrive:

1. Welcome All Families
2. Communicate Effectively
3. Support Student Success
4. Speak Up For Every Child
5. Share Power
6. Collaborate With The Community

We've provided a breakdown of each of these Standards, with a description and goals that further describe the Standard in action. We've included a set of indicators that describe the more specific actions that schools and PTAs can take to achieve the goal. We also provide a bulleted list of the major changes under each Standard from the 2008 version to the updated 2022 version.



Standard 1 Welcome All Families

The school treats families as valued partners in their child's education and facilitates a sense of belonging in the school community.

Goal 1: Build a Community of Belonging: When families engage with the school and PTA, do they feel respected, understood and connected to the school community?

School & PTA indicators:

- ↘ Learn about families and foster respectful attitudes
- ↘ Provide time, training, and resources for relationship-building
- ↘ Facilitate opportunities for restoration and connection, especially with historically marginalized families and students
- ↘ Use culturally and linguistically responsive engagement practices
- ↘ Invite families to contribute to the school community

Goal 2: Create an Inclusive Environment: Do the school's and PTA's efforts encourage engagement with and among the diversity of families in the community?

School & PTA indicators:

- ↘ Encourage school staff to see engaging all families as part of their responsibilities
- ↘ Create an accessible, family-friendly campus and/or virtual school
- ↘ Track family engagement data and regularly examine it to identify gaps in access
- ↘ Learn about and remove barriers for families to participate fully

Summary of changes:

- Expanded focus on school efforts that foster families' sense of belonging
- Broadened indicators on providing opportunities for volunteering to providing opportunities to contribute and on removing economic barriers to participation to removing barriers to participation
- Added indicators for using linguistically and culturally responsive outreach, creating opportunities for connection with marginalized families, building staff capacity, learning about families and using family engagement data



Standard 2 Communicate Effectively

The school supports staff to engage in proactive, timely, and two-way communication so that all families can easily understand and contribute to their child's educational experience.

Goal 1: Exchange Information Between School and Families: Are families able to receive and share information in culturally and linguistically sustaining ways?

School & PTA indicators:

- ↘ Learn about and meet families' communication preferences
- ↘ Address access by providing interpretation, translation, and/or accommodations
- ↘ Coordinate information-sharing across communication outlets
- ↘ Gather family input and report back with how input was used
- ↘ Foster transparency and enable families to follow-up
- ↘ Co-create engagement plans for times of crisis

Goal 2: Facilitate Parent-Teacher Communication: Does the school and PTA promote communication between families and teachers?

School & PTA indicators:

- ↘ Co-develop communication expectations with families and staff
- ↘ Provide time, training and resources for parent-teacher communication
- ↘ Solicit teacher and family feedback on how communication is going and what could be improved

Summary of changes:

- Expanded focus on school efforts to use two-way communication that is proactive and timely
- Separated one goal on information-sharing and parent-teacher communication into two goals
- Broadened indicators on surveying families to gathering input and circling back, on accessing the principal to fostering transparency, and on using multiple communication outlets to coordinating across outlets
- Added indicators for learning about and meeting communication preferences, addressing language and disability access, co-creating engagement plans for times of crisis, building staff capacity and co-developing and reviewing expectations on parent-teacher communication
- Moved indicator on providing information on current issues to Standard 4



Standard 3 Support Student Success

The school builds the capacity of families and educators to continuously collaborate to support students' academic, social and emotional learning.

Goal 1: Team-Up For Student Success: Are families, students and educators on the same page about how students are progressing?

School & PTA indicators:

- ↘ Support educators to partner with families and students to set social, emotional, and academic goals
- ↘ Provide an understandable and accurate picture of student progress, using multiple measures (classwork, rubrics, observations, assessments, etc.)
- ↘ Ensure accessible, regular, two-way communication about student learning and wellbeing

Goal 2: Support Learning by Engaging Families: Are families valued partners in their children's learning at home and at school?

School & PTA indicators:

- ↘ Get to know students and families and their strengths
- ↘ Invite families to contribute to classroom learning
- ↘ Provide families guidance and activities to support social, emotional and academic learning at home
- ↘ Promote learning and enrichment outside of school
- ↘ Help families and students plan for the future

Summary of changes:

- Expanded focus on school efforts to not just inform, but also hear from and respond to families
- Broadened indicators on linking student work to academic standards to ensuring accessible, two-way communication about student learning, using standardized test results to sharing a holistic and accurate picture of student progress using multiple measures,
- Added indicators on co-creating student goals, learning from families, helping students plan for the future, and sharing guidance with families about supporting social, emotional and academic learning
- Moved indicator on sharing school progress to Standard 4

Standard 4 Speak Up for Every Child

The school affirms family and student expertise and advocacy so that all students are treated fairly and have access to relationships and opportunities that will support their success.

Goal 1: Navigate the School System: Are families knowledgeable and able to raise questions or concerns about their child’s educational experience?

School & PTA indicators:

- ↘ Build school staffs’ skills to build trust and problem-solve with students and families
- ↘ Make it easy to understand how the school and district operate
- ↘ Comply with families’ rights under federal and state laws
- ↘ Connect families to resources that address their questions or concerns
- ↘ Make school staff and families aware of conflict resolution processes and apply them fairly

Goal 2: Address inequitable outcomes and access. Does the school and PTA remove barriers for families to be advocates for and with students’—particularly those who are most marginalized?

School & PTA indicators:

- ↘ Encourage community and leadership among historically under-represented groups
- ↘ Share understandable, disaggregated data on school progress and practices
- ↘ Recognize and work to eliminate bias in family engagement practices and policies

Summary of changes:

- Expanded focus on school efforts to support parent advocacy for all children
- Changed second goal’s focus from supporting college and career readiness to addressing inequities
- Added indicators on building staff capacity, sharing disaggregated school-level data, working to eliminate bias in family engagement approaches, and encouraging community and leadership among historically marginalized groups
- Moved indicator for planning for the future and smoothing transitions to Standard 3
- Moved indicator for engaging in civic advocacy to Standard 5

Standard 5 Share Power

The school partners with families in decisions that affect children and families and together—and as a team, inform, influence and create policies, practices and programs.

Goal 1: Strengthen the Family’s Voice in Shared Decision Making: Are families partners in making decisions that affect their children at school and in the community?

School & PTA indicators:

- ↘ Transparently and accessibly communicate about decision-making processes
- ↘ Build shared knowledge about decisions that affect children
- ↘ Give families and students voice in decisions that affect children
- ↘ Identify and remedy power imbalances
- ↘ Track data and fill gaps for representative input and power in decisions

Goal 2: Build Families’ Connections: Do families have a strong, broad-based organization that offers regular opportunities to develop relationships and raise concerns with school leaders, public officials, and business and community leaders?

School & PTA indicators:

- ↘ Connect families to local officials
- ↘ Foster student and family leadership and civic engagement
- ↘ Support the development of an effective family/parent organization that represents all families

Summary of changes:

- Expanded focus on school efforts to share power
- Broadened indicator on addressing equity issues with indicators on identifying and remedying power imbalances, being accessible and transparent in decision-making processes, building shared knowledge about issues, and tracking data and filling gaps for representative input
- Added indicator on fostering student and family leadership and civic engagement



Standard 6 Collaborate with Community

The school collaborates with community organizations and members to connect students, families and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services and civic participation.

Goal 1: Build a Strong Foundation for Community Partnerships: Does the school and PTA have a plan for when and how to engage community partners?

School & PTA indicators:

- ↘ Map community needs and assets
- ↘ Align partnerships to school improvement planning
- ↘ Work with partners to clarify roles and responsibilities

Goal 2: Connect the School with Community Partners: Do family and school leaders work closely with community organizations, businesses, and institutions of higher education?

School & PTA indicators:

- ↘ Understand issues affecting the community and contribute to community-wide solutions
- ↘ Address student and family basic needs through community resources
- ↘ Build staffs' cultural competence through community partnerships
- ↘ Act as a hub of community life

Summary of changes:

- Expanded focus on school efforts to collaborate with the community
- Specified indicator on linking to community resources to address family and student needs
- Added goal on building a strong foundation for community partnerships, including indicators for mapping community assets and needs, aligning community partners to school improvement planning, and clarifying roles and responsibilities
- Added indicators on building staff cultural competence through community partners and understanding issues affecting the community

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About National PTA's Center for Family Engagement

National PTA's Center for Family Engagement was established in 2017 to take a deliberate approach reimagining family engagement practices and policies for greater equity and effectiveness, and to apply these transformative family engagement approaches across the education system. The Center for Family Engagement builds on PTA's 125-year history and commitment to making every child's potential a reality by empowering and engaging families and communities to advocate for all children.



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