



C.A.F.É

**“Circles of Adults Focusing  
On Education”**

Dialogues Leading To Improved Achievement  
An initiative by the GA State Personnel Development Grant

**The following questions were developed by Georgia State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) stakeholders in a web-based meeting hosted by the IDEA Partnership<sup>1</sup>. These questions are recommended as “Dialogue Starters” to accompany the National Dropout Prevention Center-Network document: *Effective Strategies on Family Engagement*.**

**Reaction Questions:**

1. What attracted you to this C.A.F.É .on family engagement?
2. What does family engagement mean to you?
  - a. From the family perspective, what are some of the common views of engagement?
  - b. From the school perspective, what are some of the common views of engagement?
  - c. From the student/youth perspective, what are some of the common views of engagement?
3. Does it mean different things in different cultures? How can we be sensitive to these differences?
4. How will we agree to use the word “engagement” from this point forward in our dialogue?
5. Researchers have shown that all parents can have an influence on their child(ren)'s academic success regardless of socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and educational background for students of all ages<sup>2</sup>.
  - a. Can you share your experience related to family engagement in reaction to the statement above?
6. In your experience, are there stakeholders who may not want to engage with schools? Please describe an example that illustrates this point.

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<sup>1</sup> The IDEA Partnership is an affiliation of 55 national organizations representing families, practitioners, administrators, institutes of higher education and policy makers. This federal technical assistance center is funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and housed at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE).

<sup>2</sup> Henderson and Mapp, 2002; and Mapp, 2004 in NDPC/N, 2008, p. 1.

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7. In your experience, are there any stakeholders who may not need to be engaged with schools?  
Please describe an example that speaks to this point.
8. In your view, who is responsible for promoting engagement? Who might agree/disagree with this view?
9. In your experience, what groups report being successfully engaged in family-school collaboration?  
What can we learn from this?
10. What does it mean to communicate high expectations?
  - a. Do educators understand the educational expectations that the families of their students have for their child(ren)?
11. Consider the following excerpt from our source document: “While some parents are informed about some things some of the time by some teachers in some schools, some families still feel “lucky” to be informed about or asked to participate in activities with their children.”<sup>3</sup>
  - a. What is your reaction to this statement?

**Application Questions:**

1. What are some of the most successful strategies for engaging families in support of their child(ren)'s academic success?
  - a. What might this look like for older students?
2. What does a comprehensive approach to family engagement look like across the grade span?
  - a. What does family engagement look like in high school?
  - b. What does family engagement look like in middle school?
  - c. What does family engagement look like in elementary school?
  - d. What does family engagement look like in pre-school?
  - e. Do you have other thoughts on this?

<sup>3</sup> NDPC/N, 2008, p. 1 downloaded on November 10, 2008 from  
[http://www.dropoutprevention.org/effstrat/family\\_engagement/overview.htm](http://www.dropoutprevention.org/effstrat/family_engagement/overview.htm)

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3. The research says that all parents, regardless of income, education level, race/ethnicity or cultural background can have a positive impact on student achievement by engaging with their child(ren)'s school.
  - a. What types of activities might build the capacity for staff to work with all families?
  - b. What types of activities might create a school culture that considers the needs and assets of all families?
  - c. What types of activities would build the family capacity to work with educators/school staff?
  - d. If these activities do not exist, who should develop them?
4. What kinds of interactions allow the development of a core set of values of respect and dignity for all families?
5. What are some observable behaviors that make families more/less invited in schools?
6. What is the role of the community in promoting deeper family engagement?
7. Several stakeholders have reported a “no news is good news” approach to engagement between family and school. Some feel this comes about because schools/families have taken assumed separate roles. Others feel that families retreat because they are uncomfortable or do not feel competent in educational aspects of their child(ren)'s lives.
  - a. Are there other explanations?
  - b. What are some ways to approach each of these perspectives on common behaviors observed in family-school interactions?
8. If there was a trust relationship between the school and family, ...
  - a. How could student attendance be encouraged?
  - b. How could more productive discipline strategies be developed?
  - c. How might expectations be jointly communicated?
9. What are some specific examples of how families can support learning at home?
10. Several stakeholders stated the need to promote more understanding and interaction between families and staff members that move beyond the typical kinds of engagement?
  - a. What are some ways to support families as they try out new behaviors?
  - b. What are some ways to support or coach staff through behavior changes?
11. Note: The following question relates to Reaction Question #2.  
Of the views expressed which facilitates interaction and which act as roadblocks to interaction?  
Explain:

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