

7 Shifts: Where Is Your School or Organization?

The 7 shifts of family engagement highlight opportunities to energize how your organization partners with families. **As you reflect on your school or organization’s default mindsets, check the box that best fits your approach as a whole.**

FROM AN EMPHASIS ON . . .

TOWARD AN EMPHASIS ON . . .

1. Deficits, Risks, or Dysfunction in Families

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- Talk about how families fail their kids
- Offer programs focused on risks
- View failures as evidence of dysfunction

Families’ Strengths and Resilience

- See families as critical resources
- Tap strengths to tackle challenges
- See failures as opportunities to learn

2. Recruiting Families to Participate

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- We know what families need
- Communication is primarily one way
- If they don’t show up, they don’t care

Building Relationships with Families

- Take time to build mutual trust
- Learn about interests, sparks
- Show interest in a family’s situation

3. Advancing Our Organization’s Agenda

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- Focus on what we need families to do
- “Engagement” = participation
- Send lots of information about our priorities

Connecting with Families’ Agenda, Priorities

- Listen to families’ hopes, fears
- Find common ground
- Invest in helping them be their best

4. Building Parenting Skills

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- Teach parents to manage behaviors
- Send them lots of information & resources
- View parents as responsible for what kids do

Deepening Family Relationships

- Give families time together
- Create routines, habits, and rituals that sustain relationships

5. Early Childhood as Primary Opportunity

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- Family programs are synonymous with “early childhood” programs
- Assume families won’t show up later

Multiple Transitions as Connecting Points

- Check on progress, challenges
- Be attentive to transitions
- Mark public, private milestones

6. Individual Families on their Own

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- Focus on helping individual families
- See organization as connecting hub
- Offer expert help for unique issues

Families Embedded in Communities

- Culture, community as strengths
- Support formal, informal networks about general & specific challenges

7. Serving Families

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- Families are our “customers”
- We have what families need
- Focus on marketing services

Empowering Families

- Recognize families as peer resources
- Community service, civic action
- Informal and formal leadership roles

NOTE: Shifting *emphasis* does not require abandoning everything you might do on the left side.