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How are we defining Family Engagement?

Family Engagement is:

- A shared responsibility - schools and other organizations engage families in meaningful ways, and families must actively support children's learning and development.
- Continuous across a child's lifespan - begins in early childhood and continues throughout college and career development.
- Carried out everywhere that children learn – at home and in the community.

One of the most powerful but neglected supports for children's learning and development is family engagement both in and out of school. Over 40 years of steadily accumulating evidence show that family involvement is one of the strongest predictors of children's school success, and that families play pivotal roles in their children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, from birth through adolescence. However, resources for and commitments to promoting meaningful family involvement have been few, weak, and inconsistent.

Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall & Gordon, Equity Matters Research Review, 2009

What do we mean by Systemic Family
Engagement?

A systemic initiative:

- ▶ Is focused, either directly or indirectly, on improving the core enterprise, in this case, improving educational outcomes for all children. The initiative has an impact on improving the instructional core – the relationship between the teacher and the student in the presence of content.
- ▶ The initiative is aligned and coherent with the overall goals of the organization. For example, an initiative that builds the capacity of parents and school staff to work as shared partners and connects to student learning and development meets this criterion.

- ▶ Spans across various stakeholders in the sector and mobilizes many people in the organization to contribute (shared responsibility).
- ▶ Is not a discreet “stand-alone” or “boutique” project operating in a few settings, but connects to the work across various settings and has the possibility of going to scale.
- ▶ Attempts to change social structures and the culture in which these structures are embedded. For example, an initiative that enhances the social and political capital of families and shift the balance of power between institutions and communities fits this criterion.