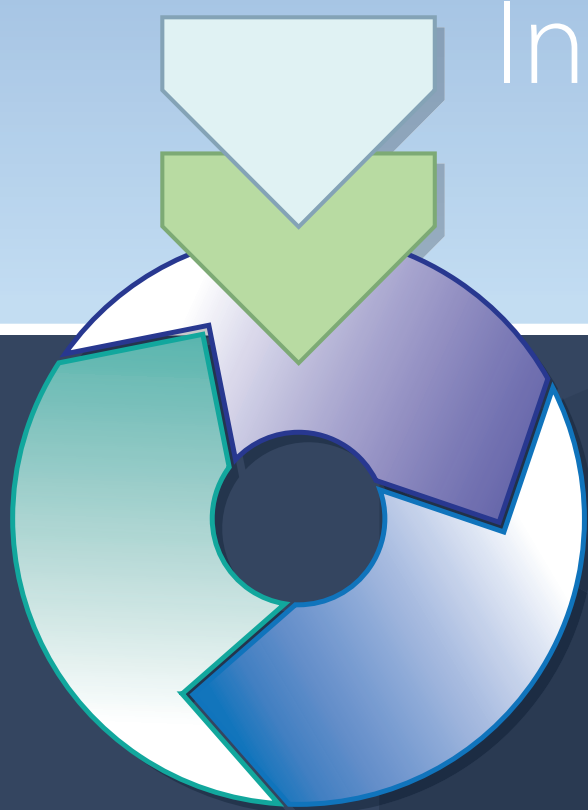


WORKING SYSTEMICALLY

In Action



Engaging Family & Community

A GUIDE FOR FACILITATORS

WORKING --- SYSTEMICALLY In Action

Engaging Family & Community

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Acknowledgments

As a member of the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group (Working Group), SEDL is part of a nationwide effort to promote bold, innovative policies and programs for effective family engagement and school-community partnerships. This collaborative informs the development and implementation of federal policy related to family, school, and community engagement in education and is dedicated to mobilizing partnerships among families, schools, and communities to promote kindergarten readiness, improve schools, and increase student achievement. To accomplish its goals, the Working Group has drawn on decades of research and the rich experiences of its members to create a description of effective family and community engagement to ground its work. This description helps frame the concepts, processes, and actions suggested in this guide. We wish to express our appreciation to the members of the Working Group for its contributions to *Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community*.

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Introduction to *Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community*

Although many schools across the nation have made notable strides in increasing student achievement, attendance, and graduation rates, more than 13,000 U.S. schools are currently designated as low performing and in need of improvement (Duncan, 2009). These low-performing schools, and others, are actively seeking innovative strategies to address the challenges they face to improve school performance and increase student learning. Family and community engagement is one of these innovative strategies.

Recognizing the integral role of family and community in supporting student academic success, SEDL's *Working Systemically in Action* (Cowan, Joyner, & Beckwith, 2008) includes family and community as a necessary component for implementing systemic school improvement. This supplement to that earlier publication provides practical guidance for educators who are seeking to engage family and community members in systemic improvement. This guide includes explanations for key concepts, suggestions, and ready-to-use tools to help educators, families, and community members come together as partners in systemic support for student learning.

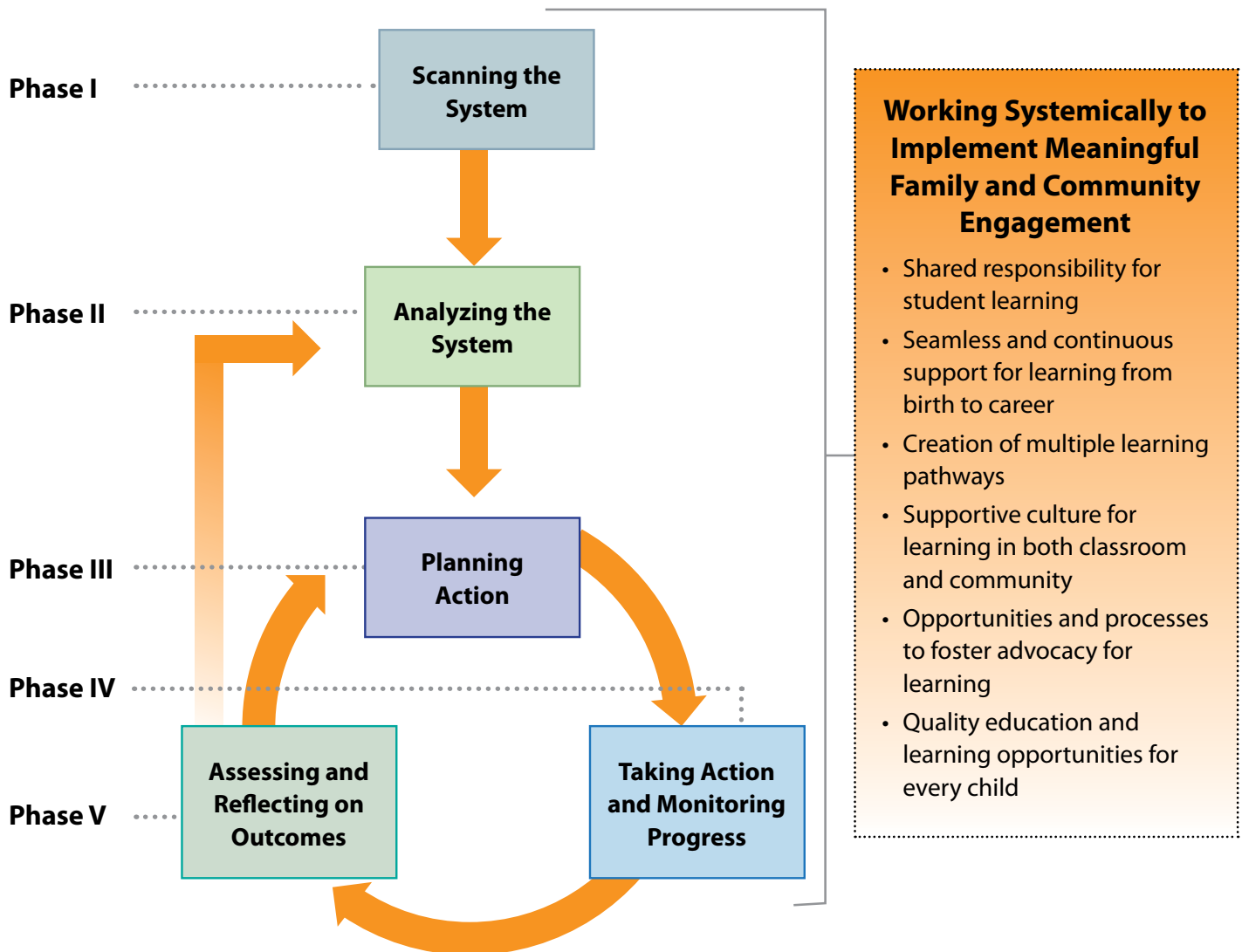
Overview of SEDL's Systemic Approach to Improvement

Working Systemically in Action presents SEDL's systemic approach to school improvement. This approach is grounded in a strong research base tightly linked to practice and in SEDL's work with districts and schools. By working systemically, district and school staff move away from fragmented improvement efforts to a more coherent and connected way of operating. SEDL has learned that school improvement—including engaging family and community with districts and schools—happens best when people and organizations come together to achieve common goals, recognizing that they can accomplish more together than separately. SEDL approaches systemic improvement as a team-led effort that uses a five-phase process to work on three dimensions of the system:

- The components that ground effective school improvement—*what* makes a strong educational support structure

- The core competencies needed for effective school improvement—*how* all involved build the capacity to create those support structures
- The levels of the system that need to play a role—*who* to involve in efforts to create strong educational support structures

The graphic below illustrates how family and community engagement is incorporated into SEDL's five-phase approach to working systemically.¹



1. The characteristics for implementing meaningful family and community engagement on this graphic are adapted from the description of effective family and community engagement created by the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group (2009).

Components

The eight components in the Working Systemically approach are key aspects of the educational system on which schools, districts, and state departments typically focus school improvement efforts. As educators work with family and community to strengthen each component, they take a team or partnership approach to create the structures needed to provide all children with a quality education.

- **Family and Community**—The positive connections among teachers, families, schools, and the community that help schools fully utilize the many resources available to support student learning. These family-and-community connections play an integral role in making sure that every child has a quality education.
- **Standards**—The state’s expectations for what content students are expected to know and demonstrate at different grade levels and in different subject areas. Standards are typically global and are used to guide decisions on the curriculum taught at each grade level.
- **Curriculum**—The district’s expectations for what the students are expected to know and be able to do at different grade levels and in different subject areas. The curriculum is aligned to state standards. It is the content to be taught in the classroom.
- **Instruction**—The teaching methods used to deliver the curriculum and meet student’s academic learning needs. Traditionally, we have thought of instruction as classroom-based. In reality, children and youth learn wherever they are—at school, at home, and in the community.
- **Assessment**—The formal and informal procedures used by teachers, schools, districts, and states to measure the progress students are making toward meeting the state’s standards and the goals set by the district and school. The results of these assessments help families understand the progress their children are making in school and provide the community with information on the quality of its schools.
- **Resources**—The assets available to a system for providing the needed materials, staff, equipment, and supplies to meet the district’s goals. Traditionally, we consider resources to be under the control of or provided by the district and schools. However, family and community members can also provide or serve as resources to support student learning.
- **Professional Staff**—The recruitment and retention of high-quality personnel across the system. Highly qualified personnel are able to actively engage family and community members in supporting student learning.
- **Policy and Governance**—The rules, procedures, and decision-making processes to ensure that district goals are met. In effective family and community engagement, all stakeholders have a role in creating policy and procedures to support student learning and school improvement.

Competencies

As educators, families, and community members work to strengthen the eight components, leaders need to ensure that all involved in improvement efforts develop the capacity to effectively use five core competencies during each phase of the work.

- **Creating Coherence**—Making sure that what is taught (curriculum), what is tested (assessment), and how it is taught (instruction) are aligned with each other and the state’s required content (standards).
- **Collecting, Interpreting, and Using Data**—Analyzing a variety of data—student learning, demographic, perceptual, and process data—to identify trends and patterns in district and school conditions over time and to uncover underlying attitudes and beliefs that influence actions to support student learning.
- **Ensuring Continuous Learning**—Supporting educators, students, families, and community members in taking an active role in developing the knowledge and skills needed to promote lifelong student learning.
- **Building Relationships**—Engaging all stakeholders in meaningful interactions to create common understandings about educational expectations and effective ways to support student learning.
- **Responding to Changing Conditions**—Helping all involved identify and analyze evolving situations in order to make timely and effective decisions that promote continuous improvement.

Levels

A systemic approach to school improvement involves all levels of the educational enterprise. These levels designate the “who” of the system. Improvement efforts must be coordinated across all levels to create gains in student achievement that are sustained over time.

- **National**—Individuals at the national level provide focus for school improvement and increased student achievement at all levels of the system through funding, guidance, and accountability. Just as the legislative focus on standards caused educators to direct attention to high-quality content, the focus on family involvement in education has increased the expectation that educators will reach out to and work with families.
- **State**—State education agencies implement national and state policy; provide structures and procedures to support districts, schools, and families in school improvement; and create guidance to support family and community engagement.
- **Intermediate Service Agencies**—These agencies provide direct assistance to districts and schools to help support district, school, and student performance and to promote family and community engagement.

- **District**—District staff implement national, state, and district policy; provide guidance to staff on improvement efforts to increase student achievement; and set the tone for family and community engagement.
- **School**—School staff implement national, state, district, and school policy; carry out school improvement programs; support increased student achievement; and promote actions that encourage family and community engagement.
- **Classroom**—Teachers frame each child’s classroom learning experiences and collaborate with family and community to provide additional support for student learning.
- **Home**—Families support learning through activities that take place in the home and the community and collaborate with educators and others to support school improvement and increase student learning.
- **Community**—Community members, organizations, agencies, and service groups provide support and resources to districts, schools, and families and help to establish local expectations for school performance.

Using This Guide

This guide is intended to help educators, families, and community members reframe the way they implement family and community engagement—shifting from random acts of involvement to engagement within a systemic approach to support school improvement. A systemic approach enables family and community members to become collaborative agents of change who support improved outcomes for students, schools, and communities. This guide provides insight and suggestions for implementing a systemic approach to school improvement that enables family and community members to play multiple roles:

- Supporters of learning at home, at school, and in the community
- Decision makers, leaders, and advocates for creating strong community-wide structures of support for student learning
- Partners in taking shared responsibility to ensure a quality education for all children (National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group, 2010)

This guide is written for educators, but we hope that others who support effective family and community engagement will find it useful as well. It provides a wealth of information on creating systemwide structures for school improvement and family and community engagement: definitions of key terms, detailed explanations of important concepts, examples of effective and ineffective practices, recommended actions, and practical tools. This information is organized into the following sections:

- **Research on Family and Community Engagement**—This brief review of the research base for family and community engagement provides a rationale for incorporating engagement into district and school improvement efforts and describes the structures that support effective engagement.
- **Family and Community Engagement: Defining Effective Practice**—This detailed explanation of family and community engagement includes a definition, characteristics, and examples of good practice.
- **Putting Family and Community Engagement into Action**—This section describes how to use the information and tools in each of the phases described below.
- **Phase Sections**—Activities to support family and community engagement are grouped into five phases. Each phase provides practical guidance, examples, and suggested actions.

Phase I	Scanning the System —initial meeting with the superintendent, preliminary data collection and analysis, and commitment to a systemic approach to improvement
Phase II	Analyzing the System —formation of the leadership team, collection and organization of additional data, and creation of a shared vision of the ideal state
Phase III	Planning Action —review of existing plans, exploration of research and best practice, creation of a plan for action, and development of a communications plan
Phase IV	Taking Action and Monitoring Progress —implementation of the improvement plan, monitoring action, leadership support, and strategies for new challenges
Phase V	Assessing and Reflecting on Outcomes —analyzing implementation and impact, areas of new focus, and communication of progress and accomplishments

- **Tools**—This section provides tools that facilitators can use to incorporate family and community engagement into systemic improvement.

This guide incorporates concepts, explanations, and selected tools from three previous SEDL products and from SEDL's experiences as a member of the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group.

- ***Working Systemically in Action: A Guide for Facilitators (2008)***—This publication was produced by a team of SEDL staff who drew upon more than 3 decades of educational school improvement research and theory. The Working Systemically approach focuses on the key components and competencies at all levels of the local educational system to increase student learning. The guide gives technical assistance providers a framework and tools to help schools and districts establish a culture of continuous inquiry and collaboration as well as develop structures and leadership roles necessary to support and sustain both student and staff learning.
- ***Beyond the Building: A Facilitation Guide for School, Family, and Community Connections (2006)***—This multimedia toolkit draws heavily on research to help educators, families, and community organizers incorporate research-based practices into engagement activities. The toolkit includes tools to help stakeholders understand the central themes and challenges of effective family and community engagement efforts and to apply research to decision making.
- ***Creating Collaborative Action Teams: Working Together for Student Success (2000)***—This toolkit was created by a collaborative team of community organizers and educators and provides hands-on tools and resources to help implement the Collaborative Action Team process. The toolkit includes explanations of key concepts, activities, and resources that individuals, school districts, and other organizations can use to develop a partnership between home, school, community, and students at the local level.
- ***National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group (Working Group)***—Drawing on their in-depth knowledge of the research base and their own practical experiences, the members of this collaborative inform the development and implementation of federal policy related to family, school, and community engagement in education. Specifically, the Working Group seeks to mobilize partnerships among families, schools, and communities to promote kindergarten readiness, improve schools, and increase student achievement. The group's description of effective family and community engagement helped inform the concepts, processes, and actions suggested in this guide. The following Web site provides more information on the Working Group: <http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/projects/national-family-school-and-community-engagement-working-group>.

Research on Family and Community Engagement

Numerous researchers have reported that effective family and community engagement with schools can help produce a range of positive outcomes including improved student achievement, increased attendance, greater community-wide support for school improvement, and innovative methods to address challenges (Blank, Berg, & Melaville, 2006; Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2005; Datnow, Lasky, Stringfield, & Teddlie, 2005; Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Sheldon, 2007). To accomplish the best results, district, school, family, and community leaders need to align their actions and strategies to research and best practices. Henderson and Mapp (2002) recommend that districts and schools take a collaborative approach:

Embrace a philosophy of partnership and be willing to share power with families. Make sure that parents, school staff, and community members understand that the responsibility for children's educational development is a collaborative enterprise.

- *Adopt a philosophy that family and community engagement is a key component of your whole school reform plan.*
- *Find workable ways to involve families and community members in planning, establishing policy, and making decisions. (p. 67).*

The following five categories help frame what the research says and why districts and schools should embrace family and community engagement as an innovative strategy to support systemic improvement. For a more detailed explanation of the studies referenced in each category, see page 117.

Student Achievement and School Improvement

- **Overall Benefits for Students**—When families are meaningfully engaged in supporting their children’s learning,
 - children tend to do better in school,
 - stay in school longer, and
 - attend postsecondary school (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).
- **Impact on Student Performance**—When schools use effective family engagement practices, students are 10 times more likely to improve their math performance and 4 times more likely to improve their reading performance than students attending schools not implementing meaningful engagement practices (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010).
- **Shared Commitment to All Students**—Family and community partnerships also raise community-wide awareness of school improvement needs and motivate family and community members to focus on the needs of all children. Henderson, Jacob, Kernan-Schloss, and Raimondo (2004) describe the long-term benefits of family and community engagement programs:

As schools move toward partnership with families, parents tend to move beyond their concern for their own child toward commitment for all children. This expanded focus can make an important difference in a school. When parents are intent on improving all children’s achievement, the conversations between parents and teachers can encompass broader issues, practices and challenges that affect how learning happens in the classroom. Parents’ actions also become more purposeful and supportive of schools. (p. 23)

Systemic Support for Family and Community Engagement Practices

- **Leadership**—Researchers have long found that leaders often determine not only the effectiveness of family and community engagement programs but also whether efforts provide the needed support for increased student performance.
 - Strong school leadership and organizational structures that establish expectations for meaningful engagement programs provide greater support for student learning (Blank et al., 2006; Bryk et al., 2010; Redding, Langdon, Meyer, & Sheley, 2004; Resto & Alston, 2006; Stewart, 2008).
 - If districts and school leaders are to create the most effective family and community engagement programs, they must make engagement a priority and provide support through both policy and practice (Fege, 2006).

- Systems that create effective engagement programs have to shift from a traditional management style to a more collaborative decision-making and management approach (Higgins, Young, Weiner, & Wlodarczyk, 2009–2010).
- **Long-term and Intensive Implementation**—Implementing systemic improvement is not a piecemeal process (Corcoran & Christman, 2002).
 - Institutionalized strategies that enable family and community engagement to build over time and actively involve families in meaningful interactions about student performance and school improvement yield positive results (Marschall, 2006).
 - The greater the intensity of the program activities over time, the greater the impact of family engagement on student learning (Houtenville & Conway, 2008).
- **Organized Structures and Practices**—The structures that support family and community engagement determine the impact and focus of the program. Strong structures and practices are defined by policy and procedure.
 - The most effective programs—those that lead to increased student achievement—have developed strong systemic structures that encourage engagement, and school administrators acknowledge family and community engagement as a key part of systemic improvement efforts (Blank et al., 2006; Read, 2008; Resto & Alston, 2006).
 - To have the greatest impact and to ensure sustainability, family engagement efforts need to include strategies for collecting and analyzing data as a key element of the processes for continual and ongoing improvement (Epstein, 2007).
 - When the structures support frequent and well-organized interactions between families and teachers, there is a significant impact on student performance and the function of schools (Redding et al., 2004).
- **Clear Goals and Expectations**—When districts and schools design family and community engagement efforts, they need to create clear and shared goals and expectations with all key stakeholder groups so that all involved know how they can support student learning (Epstein, 2007; Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2004; Redding et al., 2004; Stewart, 2008).
- **Collaboration**—For engagement programs to reach their full potential, policies, procedures, and actions need to support meaningful interactions, collaborations, and partnerships among all stakeholders: educators, families, and community members.
 - Partnerships created through collaborative relationships among schools, families, and community groups may be viewed as good public relations but are also vital to ensuring that every child is academically successful (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007).
 - The most effective programs are designed to create a vehicle for educators, families, and community members to work collaboratively to support student learning, creating community-wide structures for children from cradle to career (Henderson et al., 2007).

Focus on Student Learning

- **Intentional Connection to Student Learning**—Building family and community engagement activities that link directly to student learning will provide students with greater academic support (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Weiss, Little, Bouffard, Deschenes, & Malone, 2009). In looking at the broader scope of academic supports that students need, Darling-Hammond (2010) includes family engagement as one of five essential practices for high-quality learning. She lists three elements within this practice:
 - Helping families to understand what is expected of their children
 - Providing families with information they need and helping them interpret it
 - Letting families know what they need to do to support their children's education
- **Connecting Home and Community to Learning at School**—By providing home- and community-based learning experiences that connect to specific classroom learning activities, family and community engagement efforts support student learning no matter where the students are (Weiss et al., 2009).

Maximizing Resources

- **Greater Attention to Student Learning**—Well-designed family and community engagement programs help schools maximize resources so that the greatest attention can be given to student learning. In a child's education, family engagement is a "rich resource" for student success (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005, p. 64). This richness comes from a variety of types of actions including volunteer classroom support, home-based learning activities, and positive interactions with teachers.
- **Cost Savings**—Schools would need to increase spending by more than \$1,000 per pupil to gain the same impact on student achievement as a well-designed family engagement program (Houtenville & Conway, 2008).

Culture of Engagement

- **Invitation to Be Engaged**—The most effective family and community engagement programs create a welcoming culture that invites all stakeholders to take an active role in supporting student learning and school improvement (Redding et al., 2004; Stewart, 2008). This culture honors the strengths and contributions of stakeholders and

provides ways for all to engage in a “joining process” (Mapp, 2003, p. 6) that links family engagement to effective support for student achievement. In this process, families are

- welcomed to engage in activities at their children’s schools,
 - honored for their strengths and contributions, and
 - assisted in connecting to their children’s learning.
- **Building Relationships**—Relationship building is vital to establishing organizational structures to support family and community engagement (Redding et al., 2004).
 - Person-to person interactions that break down misconceptions and barriers positively impact relationship building and family engagement to support student learning (Glickman & Scally, 2008).
 - Actions that support relationship building among educators, families, and community members
 - o focus on building trusting and collaborative relationships among educators, families, and community members;
 - o recognize, respect, and address families’ needs as well as class and cultural differences; and
 - o embrace a philosophy of partnership where power and responsibility are shared (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Family and Community Engagement: Defining Effective Practice

Although there is no one definition commonly used by educators or researchers for effective family and community engagement, the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group (2009) has developed a description based on current best practice and research. We adapted the following definition from that description:

Engagement among families, schools, and the community is a shared responsibility. It reflects the many different ways in which families, community organizations, and schools engage with and support one another to ensure that every child is academically successful. It is continuous throughout a child's life and happens everywhere children learn: at home, at school, and in the community. It supports the creation of pathways that honor the dynamic, multiple, and complementary ways that children learn and grow from cradle to career. And it recognizes and encourages the role that family and community play in advocating for educational quality and opportunity for all children.

This definition illustrates the day-to-day and lifelong ways in which family and community engagement supports student learning—whether the student is at school, at home, or in the larger community. Looking more deeply at each part of this definition helps foster a richer understanding of the six characteristics common to effective family and community engagement.² By focusing attention and resources on strengthening each of these characteristics, districts and schools can make family and community engagement an integral part of systemic improvement.

Characteristics

- **Shared responsibility for student learning among school staff, families, and the larger community**—All children, no matter where they live or their life circumstances, deserve a quality education. However, it takes everyone—home, school, and community—to make that happen. While schools have the responsibility to reach out to

2. Each of the characteristics that appear in this section and elsewhere in this publication align to the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group's (2009) description for effective family and community engagement and the definition provided in this section.

families, family and community members also need to actively make contact and work with educators. This responsibility is a two-way street.

Characteristic in Action: In one elementary school, student attendance is much lower on statewide test days. To address low attendance, school leaders engage families in a problem-solving process that results in development of (a) school- and community-based strategies to increase communication about testing procedures and goals and (b) a family-initiated network to encourage attendance on test dates.

- **Seamless and continuous support for learning from birth to career**—From the moment of birth, a child’s learning experiences begin. Learning occurs every day and everywhere—at home, in the neighborhood, in prekindergarten programs, in schools, in afterschool programs, at faith-based events, and at other community programs and activities. Every person who touches a child’s life can play a role in making sure that child is successful and prepared for the future. Most important, the learning happens continuously across the child’s experiences at home, at school, and in the community.

Characteristic in Action: One school district engages family and community members in identifying strategies to ensure children’s smooth entry into preschool and easy transition from school to school throughout their education. This collaboration results in a seamless series of actions that span kindergarten through 12th grade. Four-year-old preschool children and their families are invited to visit kindergarten classrooms each spring. New elementary students and their families visit their new school and are assigned mentors to provide continuous support. To help with the transition from middle to high school, educators invite students and their families to meetings to help them choose academically challenging courses that prepare students for college. Local businesses and community groups encourage participation in these events through various means, such as announcement boards and public appreciation of efforts to support students in transition.

- **Creation of pathways that honor the dynamic, multiple, and complementary ways that students learn**—Family and community engagement offers educators the opportunity to work with noneducators to create new pathways to support learning. Families can play an important role in expanding learning opportunities in a variety of settings. For example, reading to children at bedtime or having them compare grocery prices can be valuable learning experiences. In addition, honoring cultural and contextual differences among individuals can help educators, families, and community members develop a wider awareness and appreciation of the varied ways each person can support learning.

Characteristic in Action: In a small, rural elementary school, staff frequently reach out to family and community members to reinforce classroom lessons. These projects range from simple reminders to read with children to large, coordinated efforts targeting specific learning needs. For one effort targeting math skills, a team of teachers, families, and managers of two local stores meets once every 6 weeks to create store-based learning activities. By taking the “classroom” into the grocery store, families and businesses get a firsthand look at the math skills students are expected to master. Moreover, the project communicates a clear message that learning applies to real-life experiences and that everyone should support learning.

- **Supportive culture for learning both in the classroom and throughout the community**—As educators, families, and community members work with one another to increase student learning, they establish norms of behavior that dictate the focus of their interactions. When these interactions result in shared expectations that encourage and connect learning in the classroom, the home, and the larger community, a culture supportive of learning develops.

Characteristic in Action: The counselor at a high school realizes that many former students who did not go on to college did not understand how to get into college. She creates a community-wide task force to identify local resources that can help students and their families prepare for college entrance. The effort results in a variety of learning events that occur over an extended period throughout the community: student and family orientations for college financing, applications, and learning about college life organized by community groups; special “college-ready” features in local newspapers; monthly informational meetings for both students and families held at school and community-wide events; targeted college-readiness outreach to middle school students and their families; groups of high school graduates who meet periodically with high school juniors and seniors; and job shadowing at local businesses and volunteer organizations.

- **Opportunities and processes to foster advocacy for student learning**—Creating systemwide processes that foster opportunities for all stakeholders to advocate for student learning and school improvement are central to systemic family and community engagement. Anyone, whether a family member, community member, or educator, can be an advocate for learning.

Characteristic in Action: In a citywide effort to increase support for school improvement, educators work with local community organizations to access the city's informal communication networks to raise awareness of three issues affecting student performance—truancy, school readiness of young children, and transition from middle school to high school. By using local community networks for initial outreach, organizers soon find they have created networks of advocates reaching out to families and service providers to address the three issues.

- **Quality education and learning opportunities for every child**—Research reveals that families from every cultural or economic background want the best possible education for their children (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Through activities that foster effective family and community engagement, home-school-community partnerships help create structural supports necessary for developing quality educational systems.

Characteristic in Action: The faculty at a middle school is growing frustrated with the lack of family input for improvement strategies designed to ensure quality educational experiences for children. School leaders decide to organize a series of small focus groups to discover the reasons for the lack of support. Through the focus groups, leaders learn that families are not as disinterested as educators thought. However, families commonly describe their role in supporting learning differently than the role educators had expected. In the end, the focus group discussions not only help bridge the miscommunication between school and home, but also help all involved develop a better understanding of what a quality education is. The process highlights how families can help ensure that their children's school provides a quality education for all students.

By strengthening each of these characteristics, educators, families, and community members begin to shift from a patchwork of random acts of involvement to a systemic approach that promotes collaborative engagement. This shift produces noticeable improvements in the way stakeholder groups interact.

- An **individual responsibility** to support student learning becomes a **shared responsibility** throughout the local system.
- A **deficit-based** or **adversarial** approach to interactions becomes a **strength-based** and **collaborative** approach.
- An **add-on** program to support needed change becomes **integrated** programmatic support for change.
- **One-shot** projects become **sustained** efforts.
- **Compliance-driven** engagement becomes **shared** ownership focused on **continuous** improvement.³

3. This list is adapted from a chart created by the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group, August 13, 2010.

Putting Family and Community Engagement into Action

The next five sections cover the five phases for incorporating family and community engagement into the Working Systemically approach. Each section provides practical guidance, examples, suggested actions, and tools for that phase. None of these actions, processes, or tools is intended to be used in a lockstep manner. However, the steps listed in each phase describe key accomplishments to be addressed before moving on to the next phase.

Throughout the descriptions of the five phases, we use the phrase “the system.” At the local level, “the system” comprises district and school staff, students’ families, and members of the larger community. Beyond the local level, “the system” refers to the regional, state, and national agencies that influence the local system. Although the actions described in this guide occur at the local level, teams need to consider the influence that regional, state, and national agencies can and do have on local improvement efforts.

Each phase section provides the following:

- **An introduction**—An explanation of the overarching objectives and focus of the phase
- **What meaningful family and community engagement looks like**—A description of what the work during that phase looks like, including a set of examples that compare a random act to a systemic approach
- **Steps to take**—A detailed list describing the necessary steps for effectively fostering family and community engagement during that phase and a list of tools in this guide to help accomplish each step
- **Concepts to consider**—Important concepts about effective family and community practices that facilitators should consider as they prepare to help leadership teams implement systemic improvement processes

After the descriptions of the five phases, we provide a variety of tools to assist in implementation. Each tool includes instructions for its use and copy-ready handouts.⁴ The following organizer suggests tools to use during each phase. These tools cover a broad spectrum of issues, and while assigned to a specific phase or step, may actually apply to multiple phases and steps.

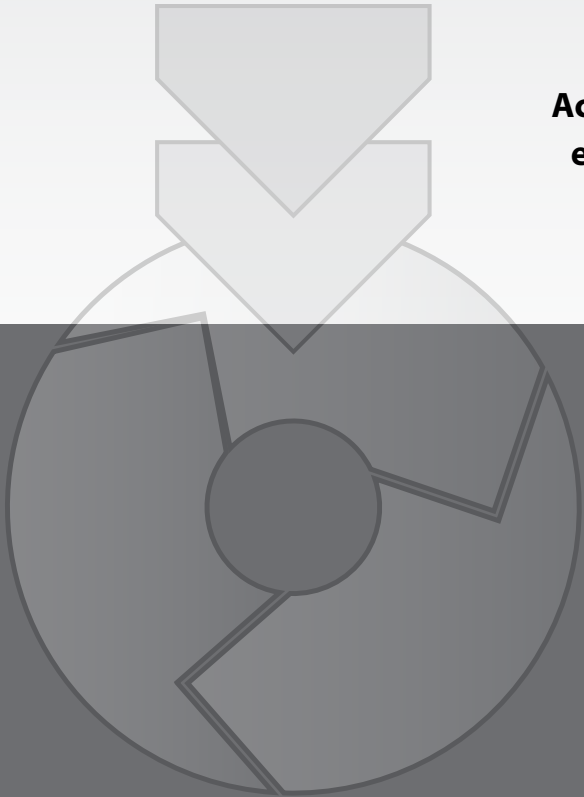
4. Additional tools that may be helpful are available in the toolkits listed on page 7 and at SEDL’s National Center for Family and Community Connections Web site at <http://www.sedl.org/connections>.

Organizer for Phases, Steps, and Tools

Phase	Step	Tool	Page
Phase I: Scanning the System	Step 1: Meet with the superintendent.	Tool 1.1: Sample Data Report	58
		Tool 1.2: Explanation for <i>Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community</i>	60
	Step 2: Develop a general understanding of the factors affecting school performance.	Tool 1.1: Sample Data Report	58
		Tool 1.2: Explanation for <i>Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community</i>	60
	Step 3: Create a commitment to engage family and community members.	Tool 1.1: Sample Data Report	58
		Tool 1.2: Explanation for <i>Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community</i>	60
Phase II: Analyzing the System	Step 1: Form a leadership team representing diverse perspectives.	Tool 2.1: Identifying a Representative Leadership Team	64
		Tool 2.2: Factors Affecting Team Effectiveness	68
		Tool 2.3: Consensus Decision Making	72
		Tool 2.4: Effective Collaboration	74
		Tool 2.5: Definition of Family and Community Engagement	76
	Step 2: Foster interactions among team members.	Tool 2.2: Factors Affecting Team Effectiveness	68
		Tool 2.3: Consensus Decision Making	72
		Tool 2.4: Effective Collaboration	74
		Tool 2.5: Definition of Family and Community Engagement	76
	Step 3: Collect and organize additional data.	Tool 1.1: Sample Data Report	58
		Tool 2.6: Resources for Collecting Perceptual Data	78
		Tool 2.7: Data Analysis	94
	Step 4: Identify challenges to student learning by reviewing data through a gap-analysis process.	Tool 2.3: Consensus Decision Making	72
		Tool 2.4: Effective Collaboration	74
		Tool 2.7: Data Analysis	94
		Tool 2.8: Gap Analysis and Shared Vision of the Ideal State	96
		Tool 2.9: Sample Summary of Team's Work	100

Phase	Step	Tool	Page
	Step 5: Create a shared vision of the ideal state.	Tool 2.5: Definition of Family and Community Engagement	76
		Tool 2.7 Data Analysis	94
		Tool 2.8: Gap Analysis and Shared Vision of the Ideal State	96
		Tool 2.9: Sample Summary of Team's Work	100
Phase III: Planning Action	Step 1: Review progress, existing improvement plans, programs, and structures.	Tool 2.9: Sample Summary of Team's Work	98
	Step 2: Explore research-based practices to include in the plan and to help build a shared vision.	Tool 1.2: Explanation for <i>Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community</i>	60
		Tool 2.5: Definition of Family and Community Engagement	76
		Tool 3.1: Making the Case for Best Practice	102
	Step 3: Connect family and community engagement strategies to efforts to support student learning.	Tool 1.2, Part B: Common Types of Family and Community Engagement	62
		Tool 2.2: Factors Affecting Team Effectiveness	68
		Tool 3.1: Making the Case for Best Practice	102
	Step 4: Create a plan for action.	Tool 1.2, Part A: Family and Community Engagement in a Systemic Approach to Improvement	61
		Tool 2.2: Factors Affecting Team Effectiveness	68
	Step 5: Create a process for communication.	Tool 3.2: Planning for Communications	104
Phase IV: Taking Action and Monitoring Progress	Step 1: Take and monitor action.	Tool 4.1: Leadership for Family and Community Engagement	106
	Step 2: Develop structures to support leadership.	Tool 2.2: Factors Affecting Team Effectiveness	68
		Tool 2.3: Consensus Decision Making	72
		Tool 2.4: Effective Collaboration	74
		Tool 4.1: Leadership for Family and Community Engagement	106
	Step 3: Address new challenges.	Tool 4.1: Leadership for Family and Community Engagement	106

Phase	Step	Tool	Page
Phase V: Assessing and Reflecting on Outcomes	Step 1: Analyze overall implementation and impact.	Tool 1.2: Explanation for <i>Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community</i>	60
		Tool 2.5: Definition of Family and Community Engagement	76
		Tool 5.1: Family and Community Engagement Implementation Assessment	110
		Tool 5.2: Reflection Guide	114
	Step 2: Determine areas of focus for continuous improvement.	Tool 5.1: Family and Community Engagement Implementation Assessment	110
		Tool 5.2: Reflection Guide	114
	Step 3: Communicate progress, accomplishments, and next steps.	Tool 3.2: Planning for Communications	104



Activities to support family and community engagement are grouped into five phases. Each phase provides practical guidance, examples, and suggested actions.

Phases

Phase I

Scanning the System

In Phase I: Scanning the System, district and school administrators develop an understanding of what a systemic approach to school improvement entails and, after discussion and data reviews, make a decision to commit to the process. The activities in this phase focus on two of the competencies for Working Systemically: building relationships and collecting and interpreting preliminary data to gain a broad view of the current state of the educational system and surrounding community.

What does meaningful family and community engagement look like in Phase I?

Phase I begins with district administrators exploring why meaningful family and community engagement is an essential component of a systemic improvement approach. A small group of district and school leaders and family and community representatives then meet to discuss the benefits of adopting a systemic approach that includes meaningful engagement practices. During these initial discussions, the group also reviews preliminary performance data. Finally, the decision about whether to adopt a systemic approach is made.

Phase I Example: Adopting a Systemic Approach

Random Involvement	Systemic Engagement
When exploring whether to commit to a systemic approach to district and school improvement, the superintendent talks with a few principals to discuss how staff will react to this type of improvement approach. She then floats the idea past the president of one school's parent involvement organization. After these steps, she and other administrators also decide to invite family and community representatives to a few meetings during the school year. If these efforts do not have an impact on student learning, next year, the superintendent will try another improvement initiative that promises results.	When exploring whether to commit to a systemic approach to district and school improvement, the superintendent convenes a meeting of district and school leaders as well as family and community representatives. The meeting focuses on how systemic improvement can help the district achieve its student learning goals. The superintendent knows that effective family and community engagement can have a positive impact on student learning. For this reason, she wants family and community representatives to understand the implications for all stakeholders of committing to a systemic approach.

Each example in the table includes family and community engagement activities. However, the example on the left limits the involvement of family and community to a token role and may cause negative feelings or indifference because little meaningful consideration is shown for how these groups can help the district achieve its goals. In the example on the right, the perspectives of educators, families, and community members are actively sought from the beginning to help make this critical decision. This proactive approach communicates that family and community members will be full partners in the improvement process.

What steps are taken during Phase I: Scanning the System to foster meaningful family and community engagement?

Step 1: Meet with the superintendent.	In initial discussions with the superintendent, the facilitator establishes that family and community engagement is an essential component of a systemic approach to school improvement. The following actions can help the facilitator make the case with the superintendent for taking this approach: • Share research that supports the rationale for family and community engagement in schools. • Use examples to clarify what family and community engagement means within a systemic approach to school improvement and increased student achievement. • Stress the importance of leadership actions that reinforce meaningful family and community engagement. • State clearly that family and community members are expected to participate actively on district teams and in decision making from the beginning of the Working Systemically process.	
Tools to Use:	Tool 1.1: Sample Data Report	58
	Tool 1.2: Explanation for <i>Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community</i>	60

Step 2: Develop a general understanding of the factors affecting school performance.	As part of the decision-making process about whether to adopt a systemic approach, the superintendent and district- and school-level teams review a preliminary scan of the local system. This scan includes student achievement data, demographic data, and other public information. At this early stage, data collection is not intended to be an extensive process. The following examples illustrate the types of data that can be useful: • Student performance—such as student performance in reading and mathematics across grade levels and over time (usually 3–5 years) • Home support for learning—such as family members’ educational backgrounds, typical work hours for local employers that may affect family attendance at school events, or other issues • Community-wide literacy rates—such as the ability of family and community members to respond to written requests or interpret district, school, or student reports • Geography—such as the distances families need to travel to attend school events or typical travel conditions during the school year that can limit attendance at school events This data scan provides a general perspective and helps build a common understanding of the contextual issues affecting school performance. Where possible, collecting several years of like data can help identify trends or patterns. In addition, using data that provide insight into the unique qualities of a community can help illustrate a broader set of perspectives. The following actions can help the facilitator and superintendent use data to develop a general understanding of the factors affecting school performance: • Limit data to publicly available sources. • Focus on three or four issues that reflect contextual issues related to student learning and factors affecting student learning and academic performance.				
Tools to Use:	<table> <tr> <td data-bbox="553 1648 1268 1696">Tool 1.1: Sample Data Report</td><td data-bbox="1268 1648 1367 1696">58</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="553 1696 1268 1776">Tool 1.2: Explanation for <i>Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community</i></td><td data-bbox="1268 1696 1367 1776">60</td></tr> </table>	Tool 1.1: Sample Data Report	58	Tool 1.2: Explanation for <i>Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community</i>	60
Tool 1.1: Sample Data Report	58				
Tool 1.2: Explanation for <i>Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community</i>	60				

Step 3: Create a commitment to engage family and community members.	During Phase I, district administrators and others explore the importance of family and community engagement as part of a systemic approach to improvement. Including family and community representatives in initial discussions and decisions provides a wider range of perspectives on important issues related to student performance and communicates the need for broad commitment across the whole community. The following actions can help the facilitator create a commitment to engage family and community members in this effort: • Keep the exploratory team small yet inclusive of all family and community stakeholder groups. • Help participants find mutual ground in their conversations rather than focusing on differences. • Use everyday language to increase communication and sharing among stakeholders. • Create charts and graphs that help participants explore and analyze important issues. • Use a variety of engagement strategies to make sure everyone's voice is heard. • Make sure everyone involved reaches consensus verbally; do not assume silence is agreement.				
Tools to Use:	<table> <tr> <td data-bbox="561 1136 1268 1188">Tool 1.1: Sample Data Report</td><td data-bbox="1268 1136 1360 1188">58</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="561 1188 1268 1260">Tool 1.2: Explanation for <i>Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community</i></td><td data-bbox="1268 1188 1360 1260">60</td></tr> </table>	Tool 1.1: Sample Data Report	58	Tool 1.2: Explanation for <i>Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community</i>	60
Tool 1.1: Sample Data Report	58				
Tool 1.2: Explanation for <i>Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community</i>	60				

Important Concepts to Consider When Preparing to Use the Tools for Phase I

During Phase I, the following concepts will help in preparing activities that promote effective family and community engagement practices as part of a systemic improvement approach.

Benefits of Effective Family and Community Engagement

Research indicates that effective practices for engaging family and community in education produce a number of benefits for students, families, schools, and the community (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

- **For students**—When family and community engagement programs focus directly on academic needs, students have stronger support for their academic efforts, leading to increased achievement gains.
- **For families**—When outreach programs address specific family needs, families have more positive interactions with educators, engage more actively in their children’s learning, and build skills and knowledge to help their children become more successful.
- **For schools**—When family and community engagement programs focus on key learning targets, there is increased student achievement, more positive educator-student interactions, and additional resources for student learning.
- **For the community**—When family and community engagement activities coordinate efforts to address family needs and support schools, service groups and organizations can more efficiently provide resources and support to families and schools.

Committing to Family and Community Engagement

In a traditional approach to parental involvement, school staff practice a one-way strategy—they ask parents to do something for them. In a systemic approach, school staff, families, and community members work together to determine tasks, and everyone benefits from the effort. Agreeing to adopt activities that encourage family and community engagement means that everyone involved must fully commit to the endeavor. This commitment includes (1) creating processes and procedures that support children’s learning and development at school, at home, and in the larger community; (2) increasing public access to information about student and school performance; (3) fostering partnerships among teachers, administrators, families, and community members to support student learning; and (4) engaging family and community in making decisions about school improvement.

Phase II

Analyzing the System

In Phase I, district and school administrators and staff made an informed decision to commit to a systemic improvement approach that incorporates family and community engagement. In Phase II: Analyzing the System, administrators and staff establish their leadership team membership, review additional data, identify challenges or problems affecting student performance, and create a shared vision of the ideal state that describes what it would look like if the challenges and problems were addressed effectively.⁵ In this phase, the actions focus on three competencies: creating coherence for student learning; collecting, interpreting, and using data; and building relationships among all those who have a role in student learning—educators, students, families, and community members.

What does meaningful family and community engagement look like in Phase II?

During Phase II, the team analyzes varied forms of data and explores effective strategies for embedding family and community engagement into systemic improvement efforts. After the team identifies the issues affecting student achievement—the challenges or problems to be addressed, they create a shared vision of the ideal state that reflects a consensus of all participating stakeholders.

Phase II Example: Creating a Shared Vision of the Ideal State	
Random Involvement	Systemic Engagement
The principal attends a professional development session and learns that every school should have a written vision statement and goals to help steer it to success. He asks the assistant principal to write something up and post it on the bulletin board for others to read and comment on.	The school improvement team, composed of school, family, and community representatives, collects and reviews data about how the school is doing on important measures such as test scores, student attendance, and family and community engagement. Together, the team members analyze the data and identify a significant problem and potential areas of improvement. Then, after reviewing research on relevant practices in effective systems, the team defines the ideal state for its school and drafts a vision statement every member agrees on. The vision statement is widely shared with other stakeholders, and their feedback is reviewed and incorporated as appropriate. This ideal state represents input from all of the school’s many stakeholders and lays the foundation for the development of objectives, strategies, and actions in the district and school improvement plans.

5. In this guide, “shared vision of the ideal state” refers to the specific process used in SEDL’s *Working Systemically in Action* (2008). See page 96 for directions on how to create a shared vision of the ideal state.

While the example on the left is a simpler and faster method of writing a vision statement, it does not engage family and community stakeholders in the process. In contrast, the systemic approach in the example on the right intentionally engages a variety of stakeholder groups. The result is a shared vision of the school's ideal state that incorporates the voice of the broader community and, thus, is more likely to foster community-wide support.

What steps are taken during Phase II: Analyzing the System to foster meaningful family and community engagement?

Step 1: Form a leadership team representing diverse perspectives. ⁶	Creating a representative team serves multiple purposes. First, including family and community members on the team ensures that issues are explored from multiple perspectives that stem from a variety of experiences. Second, a representative team helps foster positive and productive relationships among all stakeholders. These relationships are often the foundation for a broad commitment to focus on areas to increase student achievement. The following actions can help leaders make sure the team represents the whole school community:	
Tools to Use:	• Ask staff, families, and community members to identify potential leadership team members whose support is critical to systemic school improvement. • Use outreach strategies, such as focus groups, to help identify potential team members. • Make personal contact with each potential team member to explain the systemic approach to improvement and outline expectations for team members. • Create a concise example of a systemic improvement effort to share when you recruit team members.	
	Tool 2.1: Identifying a Representative Leadership Team	64
	Tool 2.2: Factors Affecting Team Effectiveness	68
	Tool 2.3: Consensus Decision Making	72
	Tool 2.4: Effective Collaboration	74
	Tool 2.5: Definition of Family and Community Engagement	76

6. Within SEDL's systemic approach to improvement, leadership teams make decisions on goals and help to implement improvement strategies. A leadership team typically has 8 to 12 members. A district leadership team addresses district-level issues and ensures that all school-level efforts are aligned with the district-level goals. School leadership teams address school-level issues. Task-specific leadership teams may also be used periodically to address select issues. To ensure that all efforts are coherent, a few members of the district team also serve on and liaison with other leadership teams. Leadership team membership includes representation from the district, the schools, students (secondary level), families, and community members.

Step 2: Foster interactions among team members.	In Phase II, staff, families, and community members who have agreed to serve on the leadership team often need to learn how to work with one another. In some cases, this may be the first time for all stakeholders to meet together at one time and place. Leaders will need to value everyone’s ideas and practice active listening to demonstrate the behavior expected of all team members. The following actions can help leaders create a culture of respect among team members: • Communicate expectations about the importance of each person’s role at the first meeting. • Establish norms that encourage all team members to express their thoughts and ideas and give everyone a chance to speak. • Utilize small groups of two or three for discussions to help build relationships among members of the team. • Use a variety of strategies to rotate seating arrangements and the composition of small group discussions to ensure that everyone works together.	
Tools to Use:	Tool 2.2: Factors Affecting Team Effectiveness	68
	Tool 2.3: Consensus Decision Making	72
	Tool 2.4: Effective Collaboration	74
	Tool 2.5: Definition of Family and Community Engagement	76

Step 3: Collect and organize additional data.	In every phase of the Working Systemically approach, collecting and using data is an important competency. In Phase II, the focus is on examining existing data, identifying new data sources to provide needed information, and collecting these data. The leadership team collects and organizes data on student achievement, processes, perceptions of stakeholder groups, and demographics. The following actions can help leaders engage family and community team members in collecting and organizing additional data: • Reach out to community organizations and service groups to see if they have existing data that could be useful. • Create a process that involves families or community groups in collecting needed data.	
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	• Make sure everyone—educators and noneducators—has a role in the data analysis process. • Create a data analysis process that is comfortable for both those who have limited experience and those who have extensive experience with data. • Present the data in varied forms and easy-to-read formats and anticipate readability and accessibility issues such as low literacy, translation needs, or physical disability. • Make sure the data relate to student learning issues and have relevance to the experiences of team members.	
Tools to Use:	Tool 1.1: Sample Data Report	58
	Tool 2.6: Resources for Collecting Perceptual Data	78
	Tool 2.7: Data Analysis	94

Step 4: Identify challenges to student learning by reviewing data through a gap analysis process.	In Phase II, the leadership team uses data to find gaps that may indicate a challenge or problem to be addressed. In conducting the gap analysis, the team (1) compares effective research-based practices for family and community engagement with the practices used in their district and schools and (2) reviews school and student performance and any contextual factors that might influence student learning. By examining practices in high-performing systems, the team is able to frame its expectations for family and community engagement. And by incorporating the varied viewpoints and experiences of all team members in this process, the team strengthens its findings related to student performance. The following actions can help the team identify challenges or problems: • Use data that provide information about student learning. • Use data that help the team reflect on factors that affect student learning from the perspectives of family and community members. • Create a variety of processes to ensure that all team members are able to understand and use the data provided. • Incorporate processes that encourage reflection based on different viewpoints and experiences.
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	• Use strategies to help the team focus on analysis of the data and not on blame. • Provide research that helps family and community members identify strengths and challenges in the local system.	
Tools to Use:	Tool 2.3: Consensus Decision Making	72
	Tool 2.4: Effective Collaboration	74
	Tool 2.7: Data Analysis	94
	Tool 2.8: Gap Analysis and Shared Vision of the Ideal State	96
	Tool 2.9: Sample Summary of Team's Work	100

Step 5: Create a shared vision of the ideal state.	The team uses what it learned from the research and the data analysis to create a shared vision of the ideal state that describes what it would look like if the challenge or problem was successfully addressed. Crafting this statement requires consensus decision making. Because the team represents varied perspectives and experiences, team members may seem to have differing priorities. However, by maintaining a focus on addressing the challenges and problems they helped identify, team members will find they have many priorities in common. The following actions can help the team create a shared vision of the ideal state: • Focus on why the team exists by agreeing on what team members want for all students. • Check routinely to make sure team members are reaching consensus as they build their shared vision of the ideal state. • Help all team members see how their role is important to achieving the ideal state. • Keep student learning as the guiding principle for the vision of the ideal state.	
Tools to Use:	Tool 2.5: Definition of Family and Community Engagement	76
	Tool 2.7: Data Analysis	94
	Tool 2.8: Gap Analysis and Shared Vision of the Ideal State	96
	Tool 2.9: Sample Summary of Team's Work	100

Important Concepts to Consider When Preparing to Use the Tools for Phase II

During Phase II, the following concepts will help in preparing activities that promote effective family and community engagement practices as part of a systemic improvement approach.

Sharing and Analyzing Data

In a systemic approach, data reports are analyzed by groups of people who make joint decisions on actions to take, not by individuals acting independently. Tool 1.1 illustrates the type of easy-to-read presentation that can help team members explain data and begin to discuss factors influencing student learning. The strategy used to help the team process the data as a group is also important. For example, create large graphic or table displays of data that can go on the wall, so everyone can literally look at the same data displays and discuss them. Another method is to have paired individuals take data summaries and create data displays on chart paper for others to review.

Supportive Structures for Family and Community Engagement

In a collaborative process, families, educators, community members, and students (secondary level) work together to create processes and procedures that help

- identify and encourage deep exploration of important issues that affect student learning;
- foster the development of a common understanding and common expectations that focus improvement strategies;
- promote activities that address challenges to student learning; and
- maximize the use of resources that come from all levels of the system.

Leadership Approach

Within a systemic approach, the leadership structure commonly shifts from a traditional top-down management process to a shared leadership model. In other words, power shifts from the centralized, vertical model that is common to many school districts to a more decentralized power structure. There is broad and representative participation of all stakeholders in the decision-making process, and leadership is group-oriented and sensitive to the situation and changing conditions.

Phase III

Planning Action

In Phases I and II, the superintendent and leadership team, representing the district, schools, families, and the community, committed to implementing a systemic approach to improvement. They used data and research to guide them as they conducted a gap analysis to identify challenges to increasing student performance. They then created a shared vision of the ideal state.

During Phase III: Planning Action, the representative team determines the actions needed to help achieve the shared vision of the ideal state. In this phase, the team reviews its progress, gathers needed information about how to achieve the ideal state, develops a plan of action, and creates a process for communicating with the broader community. The team focuses on four competencies in this phase: building relationships; creating coherence; collecting, interpreting, and using data; and ensuring continuous professional learning.

What does meaningful family and community engagement look like in Phase III?

In this phase, the team begins by reviewing its efforts so far and then explores current conditions related to the challenge or problem as well as research-based practices that might help them in achieving the ideal state. During this process, the team actively seeks and incorporates the varied perspectives of its representative membership to strengthen its planning efforts. Members then develop a written plan that includes objectives, strategies, and actions designed to achieve the ideal state and a communication process for sharing information on their progress with all stakeholders.

Phase III Example: Increasing Enrollment in Postsecondary Institutions	
Random Involvement	Systemic Engagement
A team comprised of teachers and the school's family involvement specialist decides that students need help applying for college. The team asks the high school counselor to do something about the problem. The counselor invites recruiters from nearby colleges and universities to meet with seniors and their families to tell them about filling out financial aid forms and college applications. The counselor also posts a list of frequently asked questions and answers on the school Web site to provide follow-up information to students and their families.	When the district leadership team, which includes district and school representatives as well as family and community members, reviews current data and conditions in the high schools, members realize that many students and their families are confused about how to apply for college. Team members decide to address the problem. Using research-based practices, they create a year-long process to help families assist graduating students in applying for college. Members of the team volunteer to receive training and work on the project. Focus groups are held to get a better idea of the challenges students and their families face. Families, college recruiters, and school staff work together to (1) create a timeline for applying to college, (2) develop a list of what students need to do to be prepared, and (3) help families and students determine what information they need to communicate with colleges and participate in campus visits. The team also schedules times to meet both individually and in groups with students and families to complete the applications. Throughout the process, the district collects and analyzes data to determine the effectiveness of the strategies.

Although the example on the left may help some students by raising awareness, the activities do not reflect a systemic approach to addressing the identified challenge. The example on the right offers a systemic and inclusive approach to solving the problem. The team in this example engages various stakeholders in exploring the actual practice of applying to college, creates a plan, and then takes actions to support students and their families in the process.

What steps are taken during Phase III: Planning Action to foster meaningful family and community engagement?

Step 1: Review progress, existing improvement plans, programs, and structures.	Before developing an improvement plan, the team reviews its progress and looks at existing improvement plans, programs, and structures to identify connections to the shared vision of the ideal state. Actions to support family and community engagement should be included in the improvement plan. The following actions can help the team conduct this review: • Provide all team members with copies of the existing improvement plans. • Develop a review process that identifies strengths and challenges in the plan from a variety of perspectives. • Organize the information for team member review in clear and readable formats. • Make sure the team considers school-based and community-based plans, programs, and structures. • Use a variety of strategies that encourage and welcome the input of all team members.
Tools to Use:	Tool 2.9: Sample Summary of Team's Work 100
Step 2: Explore research-based practices to include in the plan and to help build a shared vision.	If the systemic improvement process is to produce positive results, the plan created during Phase III should reflect research-based practices that support learning both inside and beyond the classroom. While creating the plan, the team needs to be mindful of strategies that will (1) help achieve the ideal state; (2) encourage positive interactions and relationships among staff, families, and community members; (3) lead to greater support for student learning; and (4) strengthen the structures that support systemic improvement. The following actions can help the team foster the inclusion of research-based practices in the plan: • Use a variety of methods to share and discuss information to ensure that every team member is able to understand the information being presented.

	• Allow all team members to process research-based information through their own personal experience and knowledge while the whole team develops a common understanding of research-based practices central to the plan for action. Use the characteristics of family and community engagement to guide discussions (see pages 15–18). • Help all team members understand the relationship between what happens inside the classroom and what happens at home and in the community.	
Tools to Use:	Tool 1.2: Explanation for <i>Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community</i>	60
	Tool 2.5: Definition of Family and Community Engagement	76
	Tool 3.1: Making the Case for Best Practice	102

Step 3: Connect family and community engagement strategies to efforts to support student learning.	The research base for both systemic change and family and community engagement stresses the need to link all efforts to student learning (Bryk et al., 2010; Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Redding et al., 2004; Sheldon, 2007). The following actions can help the team create a connection between the ideal state, the improvement plan, and student learning: • Ensure that proposed strategies and actions to support learning are drawn from research and based on the data analysis conducted previously. • Encourage the team to link student learning to events and activities that take place at home and in the community as well as at school. • Use data from Phase I and II to help focus discussion on the specific kinds of support for learning that should be encouraged in the classroom, the home, and the larger community.	
Tools to Use:	Tool 1.2, Part B: Common Types of Family and Community Engagement	62
	Tool 2.2: Factors Affecting Team Effectiveness	68
	Tool 3.1: Making the Case for Best Practice	102

Step 4: Create a plan for action.	In Phase III, the team solidifies its ideas into a formal plan. The way this plan incorporates meaningful family and community engagement will depend on its specific strategies and proposed actions. If the plan clearly reflects an expectation that family and community members are full partners in achieving the ideal state, it will signal that their engagement is a significant part of the systemic improvement process. The following actions can help the team create the plan for action: • Include leadership roles and opportunities for both educators and noneducators. • Reach out to family and community members beyond the team and ask them to take on leadership roles or serve on project action teams. • Implement policy and procedures to encourage administrators, teachers, and other staff to create stronger structures for family and community engagement. • Ground proposed actions in research-based practices. • Determine the evidence supporting both implementation and impact of strategies or proposed actions to be included in the improvement plan. • Incorporate the team members' multiple perspectives to change the dynamic of family engagement from random acts of involvement to meaningful engagement from cradle to career.				
Tools to Use:	<table> <tr> <td data-bbox="553 1262 1268 1346">Tool 1.2, Part A: Family and Community Engagement in a Systemic Approach to Improvement</td><td data-bbox="1268 1262 1362 1346">61</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="553 1346 1268 1390">Tool 2.2: Factors Affecting Team Effectiveness</td><td data-bbox="1268 1346 1362 1390">68</td></tr> </table>	Tool 1.2, Part A: Family and Community Engagement in a Systemic Approach to Improvement	61	Tool 2.2: Factors Affecting Team Effectiveness	68
Tool 1.2, Part A: Family and Community Engagement in a Systemic Approach to Improvement	61				
Tool 2.2: Factors Affecting Team Effectiveness	68				

Step 5: Create a process for communication.	As leaders plan action during Phase III, the need to develop an effective means of communication becomes more important. At each step in implementing systemic change, information needs to flow from the district and the school to families and the community as well as from families and the community into the district and school. Although other issues may be added, communication should, at a minimum, include the key actions that have been taken, a timeline for upcoming actions and activities, the individuals involved, and the expected outcomes. Audiences for communication include other district and school
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	staff, the local school board, families, community organizations, and the media. The following actions can help the team communicate effectively: • Use a variety of communication formats and repeat messages frequently. • Present content in formats appropriate for and accessible to the intended audiences. • Work with family and community groups that have informal communication networks to share information with hard-to-reach groups. • Send press releases to the news media and other groups who have communication outlets such as newsletters and blogs. • Coordinate communications with other service organizations or community groups who also share and collect data to improve their programs.
Tools to Use:	Tool 3.2: Planning for Communications 104

Important Concepts to Consider When Preparing to Use the Tools for Phase III

During Phase III, the following concepts will help in preparing activities that promote effective family and community engagement practices as part of a systemic improvement approach.

Qualities of a Good Plan

In today's educational environment, the format and content of school improvement plans are usually prescribed by district or state requirements. Therefore, this guide does not include a sample district or school improvement plan. However, to strengthen an improvement plan, make sure it includes the following types of information:

- Goals and objectives
- Descriptions of the strategies to achieve the goals and objectives
- Steps to take in implementing each strategy
- Name of the lead for each strategy/step
- Timeline for each strategy/step
- Target audience for each strategy/step
- Resources needed for each strategy/step

- Evidence or data demonstrating the effectiveness of each strategy/step
- Planned procedure for evaluating the effectiveness of each strategy/step

For an example of a planning document, see page 215 of *Working Systemically in Action* (Cowan et al., 2008).

Action Verbs

Using action verbs strengthens any plan. Action verbs clarify explanations and expectations. The following list of sample verbs may be useful when writing your plan.

Access	Create	Increase	Obtain
Acquaint	Decrease	Individualize	Organize
Change	Develop	Inform	Plan
Compile	Devise	Initiate	Prepare
Compose	Establish	Interview	Prevent
Conduct	Identify	Investigate	Reduce
Construct	Implement	Involve	Refine
Coordinate	Improve	Locate	Stimulate

Phase IV

Taking Action and Monitoring Progress

In the first three phases, the representative leadership team, with the support of the superintendent, committed to working systemically, analyzed the system, and developed an improvement plan. In Phase IV: Taking Action and Monitoring Progress, the team and others implement the action plan, establish structures that provide support and resources, monitor progress to ensure that actions are on track to achieve the vision of the ideal state, and address new challenges as they arise. In this phase, the actions focus on five competencies: creating coherence; collecting, interpreting, and using data; ensuring continuous professional learning; building relationships; and responding to changing conditions.

What does meaningful family and community engagement look like in Phase IV?

During Phase IV, the leadership team holds regularly scheduled, well-organized meetings. At these meetings, the whole team confirms that all members are following through on their commitments and that the plan is being implemented effectively. Periodically, the team assesses whether actions are having the intended impact on student learning as well. Along the way, the team celebrates both short-term and long-term successes. Recognizing the contributions of individuals during these celebrations sustains commitment and motivates members to continue actively participating. The team also responds effectively to changing conditions that come from within and outside of the local system. Likely, the team will need to adjust strategies, action steps, and timelines as changes occur and new challenges arise. During this process, team members work together to review and refine plans to sustain improvement efforts over time.

Phase IV Example: Monitoring and Adjusting the Plan	
Random Involvement	Systemic Engagement
The middle school staff develops a new plan for family engagement. The school principal gives each family attending the school's fall open house a copy of this plan. The principal also invites the families into a classroom to hear about how they can get involved in supporting their children during the new school year. Before the families leave, they must sign a form to show they attended the session and received the plan. The plan is then posted on the school Web site.	Throughout the school year, the middle school's improvement team—comprising administrators, teachers, families, and community members—meets regularly to review the effectiveness of its actions to engage family and community in supporting student learning. Over the course of the school year, the team documents its successes and challenges. In April, the team reviews the plan's results, prepares a summary of the progress made, and shares it in three town hall meetings with students, families, community members, and district and school staff. During each meeting, notes are taken. After the final town hall meeting, several team members organize the notes into a brief report for the school improvement team to use in planning for the next school year and to post on the school's Web site. In May, team members present their revised plans to the board of education. The plans are then posted online and throughout the community. In the fall, the process begins again.

In the example on the left, families have no real input in the school's plan for their involvement in student learning and improvement efforts. Plans developed without stakeholder input, even when they include research-based practices, often gain limited buy in from families, the community, and even school staff. The example on the right illustrates how one representative improvement team regularly incorporates and monitors family and community input to ensure that the voices of all stakeholders are reflected in improvement plans.

What steps are taken during Phase IV: Taking Action and Monitoring Progress to foster meaningful family and community engagement?

Step 1: Take and monitor action.	Educators, families, and community members each play a vital role in a systemic approach to school improvement. In Phase IV, the team determines if the time and energy it has spent in reviewing data, looking at research, and planning will result in increased support for student learning and effective family and community engagement. The following actions can help the team take action and monitor progress: • Check periodically to ensure that all involved—educators, families, and community members—understand the planned actions and monitoring processes required to meet established goals. • Clarify the specific roles, tasks, and responsibilities of all team members and confirm their willingness to share responsibility for supporting and monitoring planned actions. • Communicate with the whole school community about upcoming actions the team plans to take and routinely report on progress by using a variety of media and formats. • Monitor and review actions regularly for both implementation and impact, and ensure that all stakeholder groups are represented in this process.		
Tools to Use:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="565 1297 1268 1329">Tool 4.1: Leadership for Family and Community Engagement</td> <td data-bbox="1268 1297 1370 1329">106</td> </tr> </table>	Tool 4.1: Leadership for Family and Community Engagement	106
Tool 4.1: Leadership for Family and Community Engagement	106		
Step 2: Develop structures to support leadership.	In traditional school improvement models, leadership roles are limited to a few individuals and are often tightly controlled. In a systemic approach, leadership is distributed among multiple stakeholders. The following actions can help the team ensure that family and community members have leadership roles on the district and school improvement team: • Involve family and community members in organizing activities, making decisions, carrying out actions, sharing team decisions and actions with others, and celebrating successes.		

	• Expand the leadership pool by helping all team members recognize their potential to contribute to action plans. • Build confidence and ensure that all team members are able to assume leadership roles by identifying members' strengths, skills, and abilities. • Welcome and encourage new ideas and points of view from all team members. • Include all team members in training and professional development opportunities to build knowledge and skills that will help with leadership, implementation, and monitoring. • Recognize good work done by individuals and the team. • Celebrate success with everyone.	
Tools to Use:	Tool 2.2: Factors Affecting Team Effectiveness	68
	Tool 2.3: Consensus Decision Making	72
	Tool 2.4: Effective Collaboration	74
	Tool 4.1: Leadership for Family and Community Engagement	106

Step 3: Address new challenges.	Even though the team has worked hard to create a quality plan of action, the unexpected can always happen. By routinely monitoring progress, the team is better able to spot such challenges quickly and direct resources to address them. The following actions can help the team engage family and community team members in adjusting action plans to respond to changing needs: • Identify key aspects of the improvement plan that need to be revisited periodically and involve all team members in this process. • Collect and analyze a variety of data as a team, with the goal of exploring challenges from all viewpoints. • Engage all stakeholder groups—staff, families, and community members—in discussing and reflecting on challenges and potential ways to adjust plans to address them. • Record needed adjustments to the plan and inform all team members about the adjustments. • Track the implementation and impact of additional actions.	
Tools to Use:	Tool 4.1: Leadership for Family and Community Engagement	106

Important Concepts to Consider When Preparing to Use the Tools for Phase IV

During Phase IV, the following concepts will help in preparing activities that promote effective family and community engagement practices as part of a systemic improvement approach.

Effective Leadership

Effective leaders communicate clear expectations about processes and procedures to engage family and community members in systemic improvement; build the capacity of all involved in improvement efforts; and monitor and review progress toward achieving the shared vision of the ideal state. When leadership is effective, it demonstrates each of the following traits:

- A “we approach” instead of an “I approach”
- Trust and relationship building
- Strength drawn from the varied perspectives of the team, the schools, and the community
- Shared leadership roles
- Shared responsibility
- Appreciation of each team member’s expertise and skills

Questions for Monitoring Action

Effective leaders also routinely check to see if a specific action or sequence of actions is having the desired impact. The following questions can be used with individuals or multiple team members to guide this monitoring process:

1. What measurable results (quantitative and qualitative) indicate that the implementation of a systemic approach to improvement and increased family and community engagement is benefitting student learning?
2. What progress have we made in achieving our shared vision of the ideal state?
3. What types of interactions among team members and other stakeholders indicate that a systemic approach to family and community engagement is creating stronger relationships among all stakeholder groups and providing stronger support structures for student learning?
4. Are all stakeholders working together to achieve results? How do team members, educators, families, students, and community members feel about this effort?

5. What evidence indicates that the implemented actions are strengthening effective family and community engagement practices? (See the characteristics for effective family and community engagement on pages 15–18.)
6. Did these methods and processes work well? Should we use them again?

Phase V

Assessing and Reflecting on Outcomes

In Phase IV, the leadership team, representing key district and school staff, families, and the community, monitored the implementation and impact of the district and school improvement plans and the effectiveness of incorporating family and community engagement practices. In the final phase, Phase V: Assessing and Reflecting on Outcomes, team members look critically at the overall effectiveness of the improvement plan, including efforts to engage multiple stakeholders in increasing student achievement, identify future areas of focus, and recognize progress and accomplishments. In this phase, the actions focus on five competencies: creating coherence; collecting, interpreting, and using data; ensuring continuous professional learning; building relationships; and responding to changing conditions.

What does meaningful family and community engagement look like in Phase V?

During Phase V, the leadership team examines data collected during implementation to analyze outcomes. The team focuses on issues affecting student achievement, efforts to integrate family and community engagement into the systemic approach, and how to sustain improvement. This process also helps team members recognize their progress and accomplishments as well as challenges that need further attention.

Phase V Example: Reflecting on Outcomes	
Random Involvement	Systemic Engagement
Shortly before the school year begins, the school counselor and the campus administrator adapt an existing survey to collect data on the effectiveness of the school improvement plan and interactions with family and community members. The instrument is sent home to families in the early fall and late spring. The survey response rate is 35%. The high school business teacher creates charts and graphs of the results. The counselor, the principal, three teachers, and one family member review the data. Then, the counselor files the information for safekeeping.	The school improvement team, composed of administrators, teachers, and family and community members, examines several surveys for evaluating the family and community engagement efforts within the school improvement plan. The team selects one survey and divides into smaller groups to get feedback on its adequacy from various stakeholder groups. After discussing the feedback, the team modifies the survey to address concerns. The team next meets early in the school year with a variety of groups and individuals to explain the survey and encourage them to complete it. As a result, the survey response rate is 90%. The team then creates a report summarizing the survey data in an easy-to-understand format. Team members, including family and community representatives, share the results with groups such as the school board, city council, media, and neighborhood groups to gain their support and to start planning for the next year.

In the example on the left, the survey may produce useful information, but the methods of administering the survey, reviewing the data, and sharing the results are weak and do little to ensure active family and community engagement. Moreover, the actions are isolated; they are not part of a systemic approach that connects family and community engagement with ongoing actions for improvement and increasing student learning. In the example on the right, the team uses several strategies to engage family and community members in all aspects of the survey. By doing so, the team obtains survey results that likely will provide a more complete picture. Finally, as they analyze the data, team members look both to the past and the future—how does the survey data help them evaluate the effectiveness of past efforts as well as determine what still needs to be done.

What steps are taken during Phase V: Assessing and Reflecting on Outcomes to foster meaningful family and community engagement?

Step 1: Analyze overall implementation and impact.	Phase V sets the stage for sustained change in the future. The procedures the team has established become part of a routine process that is repeated each year. This transition begins with an analysis of the overall work so far. The following actions can help the team assess and reflect on the plan's implementation and impact: • Create a review process that engages all stakeholders in assessing both the team's effectiveness and the overall impact of the actions taken. • Gather and analyze the necessary data on the team's actions and present the data in easy-to-understand formats. • Ask all team members to give feedback on the team's communications, leadership, decision making, and other essential functions.								
Tools to Use:	<table> <tr> <td data-bbox="565 1035 1268 1119">Tool 1.2: Explanation for <i>Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community</i></td><td data-bbox="1268 1035 1360 1119">60</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="565 1119 1268 1171">Tool 2.5: Definition of Family and Community Engagement</td><td data-bbox="1268 1119 1360 1171">76</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="565 1171 1268 1245">Tool 5.1: Family and Community Engagement Implementation Assessment</td><td data-bbox="1268 1171 1360 1245">110</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="565 1245 1268 1289">Tool 5.2: Reflection Guide</td><td data-bbox="1268 1245 1360 1289">114</td></tr> </table>	Tool 1.2: Explanation for <i>Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community</i>	60	Tool 2.5: Definition of Family and Community Engagement	76	Tool 5.1: Family and Community Engagement Implementation Assessment	110	Tool 5.2: Reflection Guide	114
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Tool 2.5: Definition of Family and Community Engagement	76								
Tool 5.1: Family and Community Engagement Implementation Assessment	110								
Tool 5.2: Reflection Guide	114								
Step 2: Determine areas of focus for continuous improvement.	Looking critically at both processes and outcomes may require adjustments; however, thoughtful and transparent reflection on the part of all stakeholders can help keep improvement efforts on track. The following actions can help the team engage family and community team members in determining the focus for future work: • Keep the team focused on both short-term and long-term outcomes. • Help all team members understand the difference between a failed strategy and one that needs more time.								

	• Use the diversity of perspectives represented by team members to examine outcomes from multiple viewpoints. • Help the team make connections across data from different sources and determine what adjustments need to be made to action plans. • Make adjustments, if needed, in how the team functions by using feedback to improve the team's shared leadership, consensus decision making, and representative membership.	
Tools to Use:	Tool 5.1: Family and Community Engagement Implementation Assessment	110
	Tool 5.2: Reflection Guide	114

Step 3: Communicate progress, accomplishments, and next steps.	Communicating progress and accomplishments toward establishing meaningful family and community engagement as a strategy to increase student achievement is important because it not only rewards good work but also reinforces shared responsibility for learning. The following actions can help the team communicate progress and accomplishments to all stakeholders: • Use a process that encourages the team to look at its contributions through a variety of lenses, including support for student learning, leadership, innovation, collaboration, outreach, and networking. • Celebrate success using a process that ensures the recognition of all stakeholder groups. • Use both formal and informal settings for recognition. • Create a process for communicating progress, accomplishments, and next steps to the whole school community.	
Tools to Use:	Tool 3.2: Planning for Communications	104

Important Concepts to Consider When Preparing to Use the Tools for Phase V

During Phase V, the following concepts will help in preparing activities that promote effective family and community engagement practices as part of a systemic improvement approach.

Common Processes and Interactions

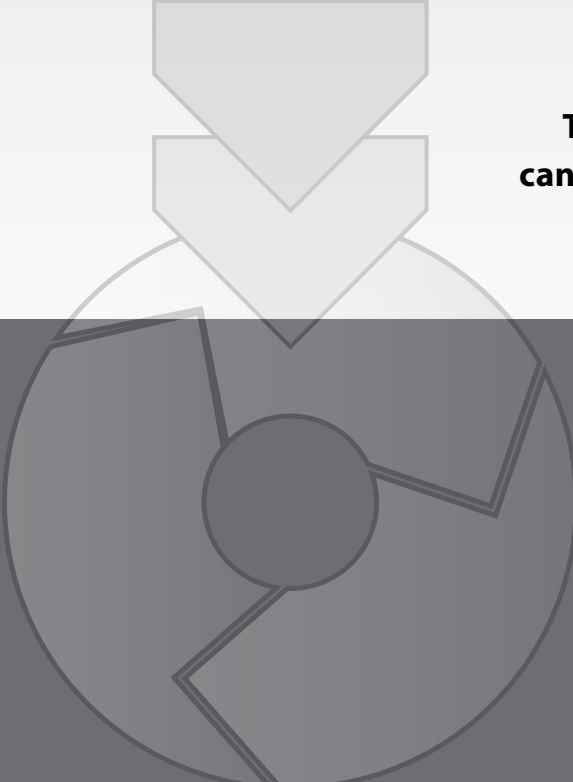
In the most effective family and community engagement efforts, those involved have done the following (Ferguson, Jordan, Wood, & Rodriguez, 2006):

- Prepared educators, families, and community members to work with one another and to support student learning.
- Helped focus engagement efforts on meaningful outcomes and goals related to student learning.
- Fostered an inclusive educational culture that encouraged everyone to become an advocate for student learning.

Common Outcomes of Effective Family and Community Engagement

As effective family and community interactions and processes become embedded in the system, the following outcomes commonly emerge (Ferguson, Jordan, Wood, & Rodriguez, 2006):

- **Relationships among families, community members, and educators that foster trust and collaboration**—By engaging family and community members through carefully crafted interactions over an extended period, staff members build relationships among all stakeholders that help foster trust and collaboration. As a result, family and community members feel comfortable to reach out to educators to prompt action or share concerns.
- **Recognition of families' needs and class and cultural differences that leads to greater understanding and respect among all involved**—As staff work to build these relationships, they stress the importance of recognizing families' needs and class and cultural differences. Regardless of socioeconomic status or culture, families want their children to succeed and are willing to support school improvement. However, a family's perception of how to do this may conflict with how educators perceive families' roles. It is through the recognition of differences and similarities that all stakeholders can find common ground on which to build structures that support the learning of all students.
- **Engagement of all stakeholders in a shared partnership of mutual responsibility for student learning**—The engagement of all stakeholders in a shared partnership of mutual responsibility for student learning provides the structures necessary to support that learning. The most successful endeavors adopt processes that encourage and advocate shared decision making and responsibility for learning outcomes.



**This section provides tools that facilitators
can use to incorporate family and community
engagement into systemic improvement.**

Tools



Instructions for Tool 1.1

Sample Data Report

This tool is a sample data report that can be used for two purposes:

1. To generate ideas about what data to collect
2. To demonstrate how to share data with the superintendent or others who are involved in the decision to commit to a systemic approach to school improvement that includes effective family and community engagement practices

This sample report includes data that reflect district- and school-based issues as well as factors outside the school that can affect student learning and family and community support for learning. The report also provides an example of simply arrayed data tables and graphs that help to identify trends and patterns in the data related to student performance and other factors that can influence family and community engagement.

This sample report illustrates the use of three types of data that can be collected through publicly available resources:

- **Overall student performance data taken from state, district, or school reports**—These data are organized and displayed in tables to help people quickly determine how well students are performing across multiple years.
- **Community demographics taken from the county Web page**—These data illustrate the education or lack of education at all levels of the general population in a specific community. While these data may not reveal an explicit connection to student performance, they can raise questions and misconceptions that pertain to effective family and community engagement practices.
- **Survey results from families, community members, and educators**—This survey provides data about the perceptions of different stakeholder groups regarding issues affecting family and community engagement.

Suggested Process for Using Tool 1.1

Estimated time needed: 90 minutes

- Review the Sample Data Report for ideas on what data to collect and how best to display the data at meetings.
- Collect the data you have decided to use.
- Create a simply arrayed data report.
- Share the report with the superintendent and other key decision makers at exploratory meetings and discuss what the information reveals. Use this discussion to talk about possible connections between family and community engagement and efforts to improve student learning.



Tool 1.1

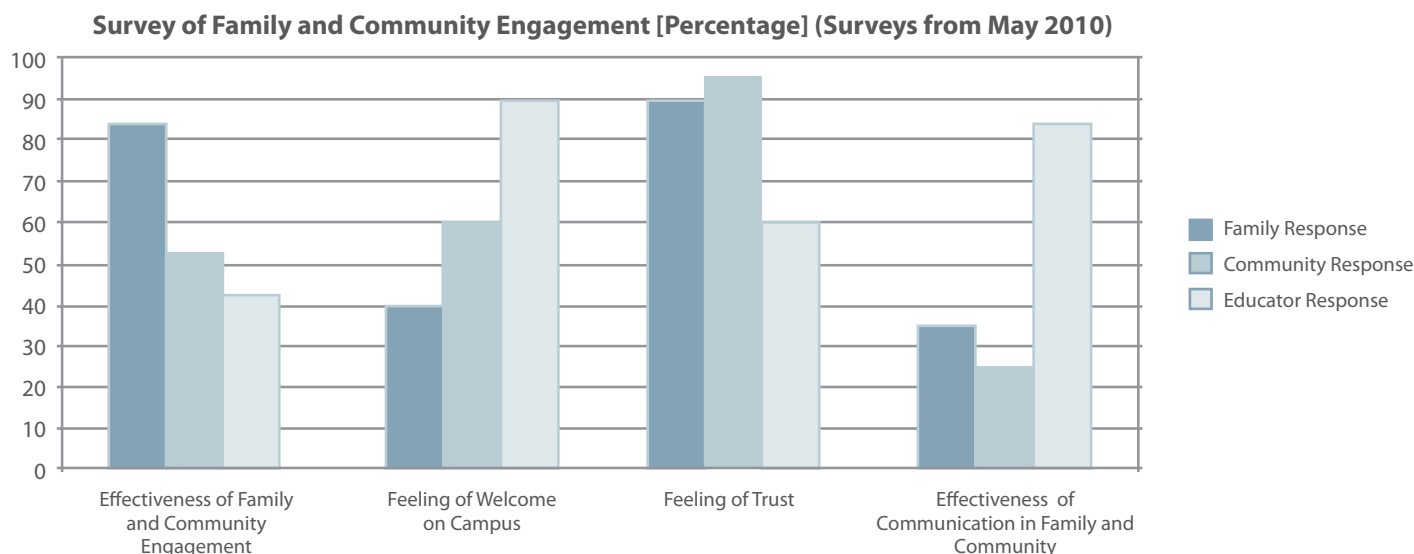
Sample Data Report

Review the data below. What do the charts tell you about student learning? What data provide information about possible factors that can influence family and community engagement? What presentation strategies are used to make the data easy to read and analyze?

Math Performance				
The percentage of students meeting math proficiency at the end of 8th grade is 31% in 2010.				
2007–2010, Student Percentage Achieving Mastery				
Student Mastery	2007	2008	2009	2010
Overall	42	49	49	55
Grade Level				
Grade 3	40	60	65	75
Grade 4	50	55	60	67
Grade 5	55	60	68	62
Grade 6	54	68	64	70
Grade 7	33	50	60	63
Grade 8	25	28	30	31
Grade 9	35	40	43	45
Grade 10	38	40	43	39

Reading Performance				
The percentage of students meeting reading proficiency at the end of 8th grade is 63% in 2010.				
2007–2010, Student Percentage Achieving Mastery				
Student Mastery	2007	2008	2009	2010
Overall	56	59	58	58
Grade Level				
Grade 3	40	45	47	49
Grade 4	47	55	60	67
Grade 5	35	45	50	53
Grade 6	38	37	37	39
Grade 7	47	55	56	60
Grade 8	60	61	64	63
Grade 9	55	56	57	59
Grade 10	38	40	41	42

Community Demographics (State Census Data)	
3 out of 4 residents have a high school diploma.	
1 in 5 residents has a bachelor's degree or higher.	
Almost 1 out of every 5 adults has less than basic literacy skills.	
Average travel time to work is 20 minutes.	
Almost 14% of residents live below the poverty line.	
1 out of every 5 residents is under 5 years of age.	
1 out of every 5 residents is under 18 years of age.	
1 out of every 5 residents is over the age of 65.	





Instructions for Tool 1.2

Explanation for *Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community*

This tool is designed to help explain *Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community* to the superintendent or others attending meetings. It is not intended to foster a deep understanding but rather to communicate the overarching concepts and expectations of using a systemic improvement approach that incorporates family and community engagement.

The tool is divided into two parts:

- **Part A: Family and Community Engagement in a Systemic Approach to Improvement**—This simple graphic illustrates the major phases in *Working Systemically in Action* and the characteristics of family and community engagement that are incorporated into this approach.
- **Part B: Common Types of Family and Community Engagement**—This table provides real-life examples of family and community engagement in action.

Suggested Process for Using Tool 1.2

Estimated time needed: 20 minutes

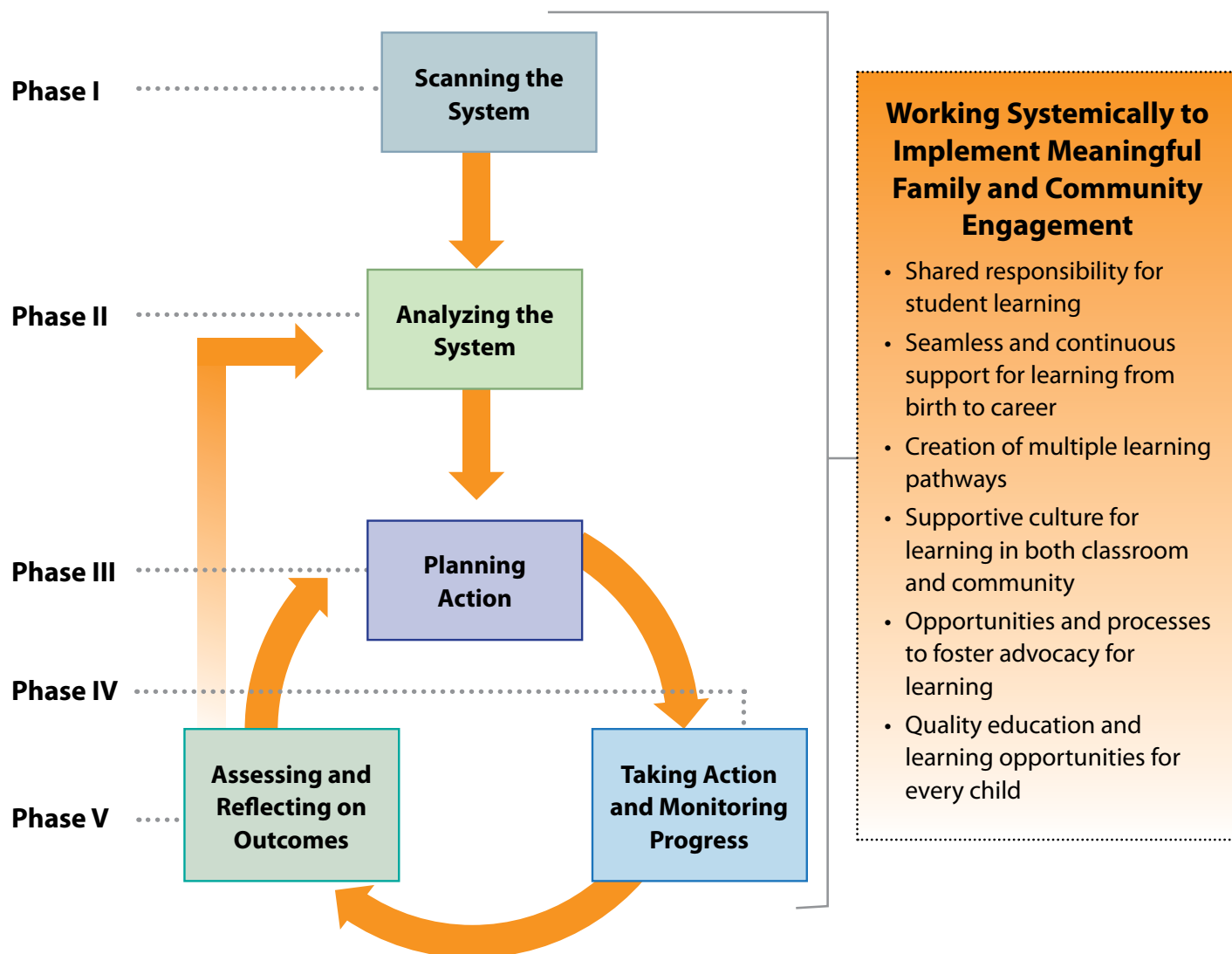
- Give a copy of this handout to the superintendent or others at the meeting.
- Use the handout to guide discussion of what the approach presented in *Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community* means.



Tool 1.2, Part A

Family and Community Engagement in a Systemic Approach to Improvement⁷

Review this graphic, which illustrates how family and community engagement is incorporated into a systemic approach to improvement.



7. The characteristics for implementing meaningful family and community engagement on this graphic are adapted from the description of effective family and community engagement created by the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group (2009).



Tool 1.2, Part B

Common Types of Family and Community Engagement

Consider the following types of family-school-community engagement.

Common Types of Family and Community Engagement That Support School Improvement	
School Actions	Parent/Family/Community Actions
Fostering Supportive Home Environments	
Assisting parents/families and working with community organizations to foster parenting skills and help create home conditions that will support student academic achievement	Seeking out and participating in activities to increase parenting skills and creating home conditions that will support academic achievement
Promoting Shared Decision Making	
Including family and community members as partners in school decisions	Learning about and seeking to be involved in decision-making groups
Expanding Family-School-Community Communication	
Promoting effective two-way communication among educators, families, community members, and community organizations	Taking advantage of and fostering new avenues for communication with educators, local service groups, community members, and families
Coordinating Resources and Services	
Uniting efforts and programs to provide services for families	Learning about and participating in services, programs, and activities that can improve families' lifestyles
Fostering Volunteer Support	
Organizing and supporting family and community members in their efforts to support schools and students	Learning about and participating in programs that support schools and students
Supporting Youth Development	
Providing services for students, such as health and physical development, creative expression, and leadership development	Seeking out and ensuring that all family members—adult and child—take advantage of opportunities to address health and physical issues, learn about areas of interest, and develop leadership skills



Tool 1.2, Part B, *Cont.*

Supporting Learning Outside of School

Involving families and community groups or organizations to support learning in a variety of settings other than the classroom

Learning about and taking advantage of opportunities to support children's efforts to learn or study outside of the classroom

Expanding Community Development

Involving the school in planning and decision making as one of the community's major institutions as well as creating opportunities for community support groups to use the school's resources to help meet the needs of the students and their families

Participating in and supporting efforts to ensure that community planning and decision-making groups consider educational issues in their work as well as helping the wider community learn about and draw upon school resources that can help support students and their families



Instructions for Tool 2.1

Identifying a Representative Leadership Team

This tool is designed to help identify potential leadership team members. The size of the team is limited, so the representation needs to be strategic. Consider who can best represent the district, schools, families, and community members in the activities for this phase: forming a team, analyzing data, and creating a vision. Typically, a group of three to four individuals will identify the team members and create a process for recruiting them.

This tool has three parts:

- **Part A: Leadership Team Membership**—This detailed list provides a quick reference of the groups to consider in creating a representative team. When asked in initial discussions who might serve on a leadership team, this tool provides a ready list of ideas to share.
- **Part B: Identifying Representative Leadership Team Members**—This list of questions helps foster discussion and brainstorming about potential members for the leadership team.
- **Part C: Leadership Team Identification Organizer**—This handout helps those attending the meeting record notes. Every person attending the meeting will need two copies.

Suggested Process for Using Tool 2.1

Estimated time needed: 60 minutes

- Give participants a copy of each part of Tool 2.1 (including two copies of Part C).
- Ask participants to review the list on Part A to get an idea about possible representation for the leadership team.
- Ask participants to discuss each question on Part B and record their responses on chart paper. Once all the questions have been answered, ask the group to review the responses.
- Ask the participants to group their responses by stakeholder groups on the organizer. Using these groupings, ask the participants to begin doing the following:
 - Create a common list of who should be on the team to represent the district, school, students, families, and community. Record potential members on the organizer.
 - Work as a team to narrow the list of potential members to the best individuals for the team.
 - Designate a few backup names in case anyone on the list is unable or unwilling to become a member of the leadership team.
 - Use a clean copy of the organizer to record the team's final decisions on members for the leadership team.
 - Set timelines for finishing each task.
- Ask the participants to review their decisions to make sure everyone agrees with the final list once the work has been completed.



Tool 2.1, Part A

Leadership Team Membership

Use the list that follows for ideas about who might serve on district and school leadership teams.

Leadership Team Members			
Whether selecting individuals to explore new strategies for improvement or to serve on a district or school team, include members from a variety of stakeholder groups to maximize family and community engagement in supporting student achievement. The following list illustrates the broad range of individuals who have a stake in ensuring that all children have a quality education.			
School	Community	Students (Secondary)	Home
- Teachers - Superintendent - Administrators - Secretaries - Principals - Family involvement support staff - Other support staff - Instructional specialists - Janitors - Community liaisons - Teachers' aides - Security guards - Title I staff - Union representatives	- Elected officials - Neighbors - Senior citizens - Block club representatives - Service organizations - Fraternities/sororities - Youth-serving agencies - Family-serving agencies - Business owners - Police/fire department - Churches and synagogues - Colleges and universities - County extension office - Museum representatives - Library representatives	- Class officers - Peer counselors/mentors - Students not involved in extracurricular activities - Alternative high school students - Homeroom representatives - Students who are not "traditional leaders"	- Families of students - Grandparents - Older siblings and cousins - Other relatives - Other guardians - Family-educator service organization members - Classroom volunteers - Family advisory committee members



Tool 2.1, Part B

Identifying Representative Leadership Team Members

For each of the questions below, work with other team members to brainstorm possible answers. You may want to record your ideas on the organizer sheet (Part C).

Brainstorming Questions:

1. Who is most affected by the school's or district's programs and policies?
2. Who focuses on students and their families as part of their mission?
3. Who affects the school's or district's programs the most?
4. Who has valuable resources, skills, or knowledge to offer?
5. Who addresses issues (before the school board, city council, etc.) concerning students and their families?
6. Who has been in the media lately advocating for students and their families?
7. Who are the family members who have been featured in the media for supporting effective change?



Tool 2.1, Part C

Leadership Team Identification Organizer

This organizer provides a way to record your answers to the brainstorming questions on Tool 2.1, Part B: Identifying Representative Leadership Team Members. The column on the far left helps to organize the list by major stakeholder group. Use the “Role/Experience” column to note the strengths or resources each person would bring to the team. Use the “Strategy” column for the best method to reach out to each person. Use the “Who” column to designate who will recruit each person.

Representative Team Organizer				
	Name	Role/Experience	Strategy	Who
SCHOOL				
HOME				
ORGANIZATION				
STUDENT				



Instructions for Tool 2.2

Factors Affecting Team Effectiveness

The steps taken in Phase II: Analyzing the System frame the approach the leadership team members will take in working with each other and with other stakeholders to support student learning. This tool gives the team an opportunity to review the factors that affect team development and member interactions. Taking the time to discuss these topics as the team begins the planning process will help members integrate these ideas into their work.

Suggested Process for Using Tool 2.2

Estimated time needed: 30 minutes

- Copy the handout and share it with team members.
- Use any of the following strategies for reviewing the text and generating team discussion:
 - Ask participants to read the text, pair with another person, complete the suggested activity on the handout, and identify two issues of importance to share with others.
 - Ask participants to underline or highlight information they did not know or had not thought about before.
- Ask participants to review the text and then provide examples of when they have seen others demonstrate the ideas on the handout.



Tool 2.2

Factors Affecting Team Effectiveness

Discuss the following qualities that affect team development and how they apply to the team's actions.

Factors	Examples
Characteristics of Team Leaders	
Individual traits, “people skills,” attitudes about teamwork, and commitment to collaborate—Effective team leaders are able to apply different types of strengths as the situation dictates and align their strengths to those of others to accomplish goals.	The key team facilitators of one district have different skills. One is the motivator and “cheerleader.” The other ensures that team members follow through on the team’s ideas. The combined skills of the two facilitators create strong leadership for the team. People enjoy being on the team both because it’s exciting and motivating and because it achieves results.
Accommodation of Members’ Needs	
Awareness of and response to the possible challenges people must overcome to participate on the team—Because incorporating family and community into systemic improvement requires the ability to be flexible and responsive to a variety of perspectives, effective leaders anticipate the needs of team members or others involved in the improvement process.	The leadership team identifies “increasing family involvement on special project teams” as a priority issue. Several project team members report that holding meetings at 3:30 p.m. is convenient for staff but inconvenient for noneducators. After switching the meeting time to 6:30 p.m., family involvement more than triples while maintaining educator representation.
Educational System Influences	
The degree to which the school district and/or schools support the improvement process—In successful family and community engagement activities, effective leaders balance the perspectives and needs of the district and the schools with those of families and the larger school community.	A central office administrator initiates a citywide family-school-community team that includes representation from each campus, families, and the community. All principals are required to participate in the meetings. When the central office administrator leaves the district, this project is not a priority for her replacement. She lets the principals decide whether to participate and excuses those who are too busy. Without support from the central office administrator, the work of the citywide team becomes sporadic rather than systemic.



Tool 2.2, Cont.

Factors	Examples
Community Culture	
Common attitudes, values, and patterns of behavior in the community—Effective leaders are able to negotiate the norms common to the community context and honor the beliefs and culture of all involved.	The superintendent and meeting facilitator realize that members of a newly formed team do not know each other. Although a systemic approach will naturally foster interaction and relationship building among team members, they implement a strategy designed to foster informal discussion over a safe topic—food. Each meeting begins with refreshments. Team members are encouraged to arrive a few minutes early to take advantage of the refreshments and exchange information about themselves. These pre-meeting social interactions bring people together, build a sense of community, and help foster relationship building.
Access to Local Resources	
The ability to supply basic resources for holding meetings, maintaining membership lists, and notifying members of activities—Effective leaders not only know how to access a wide network of resources, they also know how to determine if the resources in use are helping them make progress. Sometimes, what appears to be an innovative use of resources may cause greater strain on the work than a simple solution.	One leadership team meets in a variety of places around the community. While all team members appreciate the attempt to hold the meetings “in the community,” they have difficulty keeping track of the location for each month’s meeting. When the school district purchases a vacant building for a family resource center, the team decides to hold meetings there. The team finds having one location much more effective in supporting regular attendance at meetings.
Common Direction	
The ability to agree on priority issues, develop goals, and turn the team’s vision into reality—The impact of the leadership team’s work depends on members’ ability to develop a common understanding of the challenges they face in providing a quality education for all children. Effective leaders help all team members develop a common direction for improvement and an awareness of the needs and possible contributions of all stakeholders in supporting a systemic improvement process.	One leadership team selects “improving communication between the school and the home” as a priority issue. As a first step, the team convenes a group of staff, students, families, and community members to explore new ways to use the Internet to increase communication. Taking the recommendations from the representative group, the team works with the district technology staff to design an improved Web site that provides more timely information about events, school performances, improvement efforts, and tips for family and community members. After a series of pilots, the new Web-based communication tool is launched.



Tool 2.2, Cont.

Factors	Examples
Communication	
Ground rules that address interactions between team members during and outside of meetings as well as in written forms, such as meeting notices and summaries—Effective leaders ensure that all team members are aware of the team’s norms for communication and are provided timely information about previous and future meetings.	To ensure that the larger community stays informed about the leadership team’s work, the team develops a system for communicating information about team meetings and agendas. Before each meeting, the relevant information is posted in the newspaper, sent home with students, and announced on the radio. These efforts result in greater awareness about the focus of the team’s work and increased community support for that work.
Shared Leadership	
Processes that promote shared leadership among a wide range of stakeholders—Effective leaders ensure that everyone involved develops the necessary skills to solicit different perspectives, build consensus, provide necessary resources, and maintain a focus on student learning.	One leadership team decides to establish a three-member steering committee to coordinate family and community engagement efforts throughout the district. This committee has one family, one school, and one community representative. The trio meets each month with the full leadership team to report on its progress, plans, and needs. Prior to these meetings, the trio meets to plan the agenda and agree on the roles and responsibilities each member will take for presenting the committee’s report.



Instructions for Tool 2.3

Consensus Decision Making

This tool helps to define a process that can often challenge teams—reaching consensus in decision making. Taking the time to discuss this issue encourages the team to come to a common understanding about effective qualities for consensus decision making.

Suggested Process for Using Tool 2.3

⌚ ***Estimated time needed: 30 minutes***

- Copy the handout and share it with team members.
- Use any of the following strategies for reviewing the text and generating team discussion:
 - Ask participants to read the text, pair with another person, complete the suggested activity on the handout, and identify two issues of importance to share with others.
 - Ask participants to underline or highlight information they did not know or had not thought about before.
- Ask participants to review the text and then provide examples of when they have seen others demonstrate the ideas on the handout.



Tool 2.3

Consensus Decision Making

Discuss how the information below on effective practices for achieving consensus in decision making applies to the team's work.

Achieving Consensus

Achieving consensus is one of the most effective methods of group decision making. It requires that all members agree that they can live with the team decision. In other words, even though the decision may not represent an individual's preferred choice, he or she will agree to support it. Consensus decision making is the recommended method for reaching major decisions and building group support in a collaborative team. Some people feel it takes too much time. However, teams using consensus decision making are likely to have greater ownership of their decisions in the long run. Therefore, team members will invest more time in supporting decisions and less time in rehashing, criticizing, or failing to carry them out.

Characteristics of Consensus Decision Making

- All members contribute. Everyone's opinion is encouraged and considered. Differences are viewed as helpful rather than hindrances and disruptive.
- Everyone has an opportunity to share feelings about an issue through discussions or group surveys.
- Team members who continue to disagree indicate that they're willing to experiment and "live with" a decision for a while.
- All members share in the final decision.

What Consensus Decision Making Is Not

- A vote for unanimity
- The result of the leader's preference or someone else's first choice
- Everyone fully agreeing with the decision
- Without conflict or frustration



Instructions for Tool 2.4

Effective Collaboration

During Phase II, the team begins to lay the foundation for family and community engagement efforts as an integral part of systemic improvement. The leadership team members are selected and working relationships begin to form. The team meets to organize itself and narrow the focus of the work it will do. This tool provides information on the qualities that underlie the most effective family and community engagement practices during team selection, initial interactions, and creating a work focus.

Suggested Process for Using Tool 2.4

⌚ *Estimated time needed: 30 minutes*

- Copy and share handouts with those attending the meeting. Follow the directions on the handout. Then, use any of the following strategies for reviewing the text and generating team discussion:
 - Ask participants to read the text, pair with another person, complete the suggested activity on the handout, and identify two issues of importance to share with others.
 - Ask participants to underline or highlight information they did not know or had not thought about before this discussion.



Tool 2.4

Effective Collaboration

Consider the qualities common to effective collaboration that are described below. Then, follow the directions to complete the chart at the bottom of the page.

Qualities of the Team			
As the team develops and its work progresses, the following qualities should be clearly evident:			
Representative Membership	Shared Leadership	Consensus Decision Making	Action Focus
- The team consists of a cross section of the school community: family members, community members, school personnel, and students. - Team leaders help the team better identify and meet the needs of the school community.	- All team members share leadership roles and responsibilities. - All team members are equally included in the following: - Representing the team - Making decisions - Carrying out responsibilities - Sharing success	- Team decisions reflect the viewpoints of all involved, and all members agree to support decisions. - Team members discuss issues, listen to each other, work to resolve differences, and reach decisions based on a consensus.	- The primary purpose of the team is to take action to improve student achievement. - The team takes concrete steps to plan, implement, and evaluate action steps.

Consider each of the four qualities listed above. Use the space below to prioritize the four qualities from most important to least important. Why did you prioritize the list the way you did?

Prioritized Quality	Why?
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	



Instructions for Tool 2.5

Definition of Family and Community Engagement

This tool is designed to help team members develop a better understanding of what it means to implement family and community engagement within a systemic approach to improvement instead of enacting random acts of involvement.

The definition used in this tool is the same as the one used earlier in this document. Reviewing pages 15–18 may help in preparing to use this tool with the leadership team.

Suggested Process for Using Tool 2.5

⌚ *Estimated time needed: 45 minutes*

- Give each team member a copy of the handout.
- Ask team members to follow along as you read aloud the definition on the handout. Because this is a group of mixed stakeholders, reading the definition aloud before discussing it is a way to include representatives who may have difficulty accessing the text.
- Suggest that members underline, highlight, or star the parts of the definition that resonate with them and their experiences.
- Give members a minute or two to reflect on the definition and then ask volunteers to share their reactions and thoughts about it.
- Reinforce key ideas in the definition (see pages 15–18 for a more detailed explanation of key family and community engagement issues).
- Direct members' attention to the graphic below the definition.
- Use this graphic to summarize the underlying concept of the definition—to move away from random acts of involvement to a systemic approach to improvement that incorporates meaningful family and community engagement.



Tool 2.5

Definition of Family and Community Engagement

Review the following definition of effective family and community engagement.

Engagement among families, schools, and the community is a shared responsibility. It reflects the many different ways in which families, community organizations, and schools engage with and support one another to ensure that every child is academically successful. It is continuous throughout a child's life and happens everywhere children learn: at home, in school, and in the community. It supports the creation of pathways that honor the dynamic, multiple, and complementary ways that children learn and grow from cradle to career. And it recognizes and encourages the role family and community play in advocating for educational quality and opportunity for all children.⁸

How does this definition help you shift from a patchwork of random acts of involvement to a systemic approach that promotes family and community engagement?

Shifting from	To
An individual responsibility to support student learning	A shared responsibility throughout the local system
A deficit-based or adversarial approach to interactions	A strength-based and collaborative approach
An add-on program to support needed change	Integrated programmatic support for change
One-shot projects	Sustained efforts
Compliance-driven engagement	Shared ownership focused on continuous improvement ⁹

8. This definition is adapted from the description of effective family and community engagement created by the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group (2009).

9. This chart is adapted from a version created by the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group, August 13, 2010.



Instructions for Tool 2.6

Resources for Collecting Perceptual Data

In each of the five phases of Working Systemically, data are collected and used for decision making, including data about student achievement, processes, perceptions of various stakeholders, and demographics. In Phase I, publicly accessible data were used. In Phase II, although publicly accessible data may still be used, the team will also collect and analyze data from nonpublic sources. This tool contains four instruments for collecting additional perceptual data.

- **Part A: Stakeholder Survey**—This survey helps to collect data about the ways in which stakeholders perceive the engagement of family and community in supporting student learning and school improvement.
- **Part B: Understanding Community Context**—This set of questions is intended to be used in focus groups with mixed stakeholder groups. Typically, the number of participants for this type of focus group is less than 20. Leadership teams may find that holding several focus groups at different times of the day and in different locations will increase participation.

The questions on this tool help the team to develop a better understanding of the community context and identify strengths and weaknesses in the larger community as well as factors that may influence stakeholder participation in efforts to support student learning. The questions also help guide conversations with and build relationships among stakeholder groups.

- **Part C: Understanding District and School Context**—This set of questions may be used in focus groups with role-alike groups or mixed groups. Typically, the number of participants for this type of focus group is less than 20. Leadership teams may find that holding several focus groups at different times of the day and in different locations will increase participation.

The questions on this tool help the team identify factors affecting student performance from the perspective of educators, families, and community members.

- **Part D: System Capacity for Family and Community Rubric**—The rubric may be completed by individual leadership team members or in pairs or small groups.

This tool is used to help the leadership self-assess the system's capacity—its current state—for implementing family and community engagement within a systemic approach to school improvement. It is organized by the five Working Systemically competencies (see page 4 for additional information).



Instructions for Tool 2.6, *Cont.*

Protecting the Identity of Those Providing Data

It is essential to ensure that individual responses are not shared and that the identity of each person providing data is confidential. The following steps should be taken to protect an individual's identity when the number of respondents is small.

1. Delete any demographic question in which the number of respondents is so small that individual participants may be identified.
2. Recruit additional participants to widen representation in the data collection.
3. Create a procedure to control raw data to ensure that no data are released.

Keep in Mind

Before administering the survey or holding focus groups, work with teachers, administrators, other educational staff, families, and community members to encourage survey completion and focus group participation. Engaging a varied selection of participants will also help ensure that a wide range of perspectives is captured through the data.

The survey and rubric are written from an educational perspective, but family and community members should also complete them. In using them with family and community members, make sure that everyone has a good understanding of the survey terminology. In some cases, an oral administration may be more appropriate.

To increase the number of surveys completed, do the following:

- Provide opportunities for completing surveys at school or local events.
- Ask local faith-based or community groups to help in administering the surveys.
- Provide translated surveys or translators for those who do not speak English.
- Use innovative strategies for offering the survey, such as online survey tools.

To increase involvement in focus groups, do the following:

- Hold focus groups during school and community events at varied locations, times, and days of the week.
- Work with noneducators to identify individuals that family and community members may feel more comfortable talking to and ask those individuals to serve as focus group facilitators.

To get the best results, do the following:

- Create procedures for data collection that help standardize the collection process.
- Make sure individuals administering the survey or facilitating focus groups understand the procedures expected of them.
- Provide translators as needed.



Instructions for Tool 2.6, *Cont.*

Suggested Process for Using Tool 2.6

Suggested Directions for Part A: Stakeholder Survey

⌚ Estimated time needed: 15 minutes

- Create a process for administering the survey that includes the following:
 - Strategies for reaching out to educators, families, and community members to ensure that surveys are completed
 - Training for those who will administer the survey that includes how to give instructions
 - Procedures to collect the forms
 - Timeline for administration and collection
 - Procedures for determining the need for translation services or other accessibility tools
- Create a summary of the survey data.

Suggested Directions for Parts B and C: Focus Groups

⌚ Estimated time needed: 90 minutes each

- Create a process for conducting the focus groups that includes the following:
 - Strategies for recruiting participants that represent diverse perspectives
 - Arrangements for facilities in which to hold the focus groups
 - Training for those who will conduct the focus groups that includes how to ask questions
 - Procedures for collecting data
 - Timeline for setting up focus groups and collecting data
 - Procedures for determining the need for translation services or other accessibility tools
- Create a summary of the focus group data.

Suggested Directions for Part D: Rubric

⌚ Estimated time needed: 30 minutes

- Ask leadership team members to complete the rubric individually, in pairs, or as a group.
- Provide the following information on how to use the rubric:
 - There is a set of questions for each of the five competencies.
 - Each pair or group will look at each of the questions and the subsequent statements to rate the system on a 3-point scale (use decimals if the rating falls between points on the scale).
 - In the “Evidence” section, note the source of the data used for making that judgment.
- Ask individuals, pairs, or groups to share their responses once the leadership team has completed the rubric.
- Ask team members what patterns or differences they see among the responses.
- Use the shared responses to foster discussion about the capacity of the system to incorporate family and community engagement in addressing each of the five competencies.
- Record these observations on chart paper or using another method as part of the data collection.



Tool 2.6, Part A

Stakeholder Survey

Please complete the following survey questions.

Stakeholder Survey				
1. Please enter the name of the school district in which you live or work. _____				
2. Please mark any of the following that describe you. You may mark more than one.				
☐ District or school administrator	☐ School board member	☐ Family member, high school student		
☐ Preschool teacher	☐ Family member, preschool student	☐ Resident in the community		
☐ Elementary teacher	☐ Family member, elementary student	☐ Local business owner		
☐ Middle school teacher	☐ Family member, middle school or junior high school student	☐ Staff member, service agency		
☐ High school teacher				
☐ Other district or school staff				
3. If you're a school district employee, how long have you worked for this district? _____				
4. Do you have a child or children currently enrolled in schools in this district? ☐ Yes ☐ No				
5. How many years have you lived in this district? ☐ 3 or less ☐ 4–10 ☐ 11 or more				
For each of the statements below, mark the statement as <i>Very true</i> , <i>Somewhat true</i> , <i>Not true</i> , or <i>Don't know</i> based on your experiences and knowledge of family and community engagement activities in your school community.				
6. Administrators communicate clearly to family and community members that	Very true	Somewhat true	Not true	Don't know
6.1 the number one priority is for all students to be academically successful.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.2 all classroom teachers will work collaboratively with family and community members to connect and align learning experiences in the classroom to learning experiences beyond the classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Teachers communicate clearly to family and community members that	Very true	Somewhat true	Not true	Don't know
7.1 the number one priority is for all students to be academically successful.	☐	☐	☐	☐



Tool 2.6, Part A *Cont.*

	Very true	Somewhat true	Not true	Don't know
7.2 they will work collaboratively with family and community members to connect and align learning experiences in the classroom to learning experiences beyond the classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Educators collect, interpret, and use data to	Very true	Somewhat true	Not true	Don't know
8.1 guide decision making on the best methods to increase student achievement.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.2 help family and community members understand student achievement and progress.	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Educators provide information to family and community members in easily accessible formats and various ways. This information helps me know about	Very true	Somewhat true	Not true	Don't know
9.1 the curriculum used to ensure that each child is taught content required by the state standards for each content area (such as math, reading, or science).	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.2 the research base for instructional strategies used in the classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.3 home- and community-based strategies each child's family can use to support classroom learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Educators, families, and community members work together to create an education culture that	Very true	Somewhat true	Not true	Don't know
10.1 provides staff with the support they need to reach out to family and community members effectively.	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.2 fosters positive and ongoing relationships among all involved.	☐	☐	☐	☐



Tool 2.6, Part B

Understanding Community Context

Use the following questions with focus groups to develop a better understanding of family and community factors that can have an impact on student learning and on family and community engagement activities.

Focus Group Questions on Community Context

Date: _____ Time: _____

Focus group participants: _____

Thank you for participating in this focus group to build a better understanding of our community and factors that can have an impact on student learning and family and community engagement. As you will see, these questions are intended to help collect information on contextual issues and varied perspectives on those issues. You'll notice that [name] is here with me, and I've asked [him/her] to help record some of the points you are making. Let me assure you that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions I'll be asking, and your responses won't be identified as coming from any particular person. I will be putting together an informal general report that will incorporate some of the major points you make. This report will help identify some of the areas in which the district can begin to engage family and community members in efforts to provide greater support to student learning.

We're hoping to capture the perspectives of educators, families, and community members in our focus group. Now, before we start, are there any questions you'd like to ask me?

Questions	Notes
Talk about your community's . . .	
History - Does the school have a unique history? - How long has the school existed? - Has the student population always mirrored its present population?	



Tool 2.6, Part B, *Cont.*

Questions	Notes
Geography • How is the community around the school organized physically? • Are there natural or manufactured boundaries that people recognize? • Are certain neighborhoods closely affiliated with the school?	
Administrative Organization • How is the district administration organized? • What is the administrative structure at this school? • How are decisions made and communicated?	
Needs • Who are the students served by this school? • Does any group of students with the school need more services or perform less well than others? • What individuals, groups, or organizations currently help meet the needs of the students in the school?	
Common Interests • Does the school have issues in common with other schools in the area? • Do people from different schools have similar interests? • How do the feeder patterns affect this school?	



Tool 2.6, Part C

Understanding District and School Context

Use the following questions with various stakeholder groups to develop a better understanding of the ways in which family and community members are currently supporting student learning.

Focus Group Questions on District and School Context

Date: _____ Time: _____

Focus group participants: _____

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me. I'm aware that you're all very busy, so our conversation will take no more than 1 hour. The purpose of this conversation is to get an idea of your perspectives on the current status of your school and district and the family and community engagement practices commonly used. You'll notice that [name] is here with me, and I've asked [him/her] to help record some of the points you are making. Let me assure you that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions I'll be asking, and your responses won't be identified as coming from a particular person. I will be putting together an informal general report that will incorporate some of the major points you make. This report will help identify some of the areas in which the district can begin to engage family and community members in efforts to provide greater support for student learning.

We're hoping to capture the perspectives of educators, families, and community members in our focus group. Now, before we start, are there any questions you'd like to ask me?

Questions	Notes
1. First, tell me your perception of the students in your school and district as a whole. <i>(Listen for attitudes and beliefs.)</i>	



Tool 2.6, Part C, Cont.

Questions	Notes
2. How do you learn about student and school performance? <i>For families, you may need to mention the common sources: individual reports provided to families and the more general or overall reports on all students and the district and its schools.</i> <i>For community members, you may need to mention the general or overall reports on all students and the district and its schools.</i> (Listen for specific types of communication and sources of communication; probe for effectiveness of the communication efforts.)	
3. What knowledge or experiences have you had with any of the district's or school's programs or strategies to provide greater academic support to students? (Listen for perceptions about the effectiveness of educational efforts and the district's and school's priorities for student learning; probe for examples to illustrate effective practices.)	
4. What types of assistance have you received to help you support the district and school improvement efforts? (Listen for perceptions of support given; probe for examples of effectiveness or lack of effectiveness.)	



Tool 2.6, Part C, Cont.

Questions	Notes
5. What role do family and community members commonly take in decision making related to supporting student learning or improvement? <i>(Listen for types of engagement; probe for effectiveness and feelings about experiences.)</i>	
6. How are family and community members involved in evaluating the effectiveness of engagement programs? <i>(Listen for specific strategies; probe for examples of practices.)</i>	



Tool 2.6, Part D

System Capacity for Family and Community Rubric

Read each question and select the statement that best describes your school community. Circle the number for that statement. If the answer falls between two numbers, you can use a decimal. Write the evidence on which you base this rating in the open space under the descriptions. Once you have completed this task, be prepared to talk about your ratings with other team members.

Creating Coherence		
Taking a systemic approach to make sure that what is taught (curriculum), what is tested (assessment), and how it is taught (instruction) are aligned with each other and the state-required content (standards)		
Does the system ensure that families and the larger community understand the state's standards and the strategies used to ensure that knowledge and skills taught in the classroom are aligned to the state content standards? In my school community . . .		
③ Educators, families, and community members work together to build a common understanding about state standards and the way classroom curriculum is aligned to them.	② Family and community members can request to review materials about district and school activities that are intended to align classroom curriculum to state standards.	① Educators, families, and community members do not work together to build a common understanding about or of the need for aligning curriculum and state standards.
Evidence:		
Does the system engage family and community members in selecting programs and allocating resources that support an aligned curriculum? In my school community . . .		
③ Administrators ensure that family and community members are meaningfully engaged in decision making in selecting programs and allocating resources that support an aligned curriculum.	② Family and community members are informed about program selections or resource allocation to support curriculum alignment after decisions are made.	① Family and community members are not involved in program selection or resource allocation.
Evidence:		
Does the system help family and community members link activities outside of the school to classroom curriculum and instructional practices? In my school community . . .		
③ Educators, families, and community members partner to ensure that learning occurring outside of school supports curriculum and instruction inside the classroom.	② Educators inform families about what they can do to support classroom curriculum and instruction.	① Educators do not reach out to families or community members to gain their support for curriculum and instruction.
Evidence:		



Tool 2.6, Part D, *Cont.*

System Capacity for Family and Community Rubric

Read each question and select the statement that best describes your school community. Circle the number for that statement. If the answer falls between two numbers, you can use a decimal. Write the evidence on which you base this rating in the open space under the descriptions. Once you have completed this task, be prepared to talk about your ratings with other team members.

Collecting, Interpreting, and Using Data		
Taking a systemic approach to explore achievement, perceptual, process, and other types of data to uncover underlying attitudes and beliefs that influence actions to support student learning and progress toward ensuring that every child has a quality education		
Does the system collect and organize student learning data that is broken into categories (disaggregated) in a format that is understandable and useful for family and community members? In my school community . . .		
③ Educators, families, and community members work together to ensure that data presentation formats are understandable and useful for family and community members.	② Educators provide data reports to family and community members that are formatted to foster understanding about student performance after state test results are received or on request.	① Educators provide data reports to families as required.
Evidence:		
Does the system use multiple types of data to increase understanding of problems and formulate plans, including data on family and community demographics, perceptions, and priorities? In my school community . . .		
③ Administrators ensure that data used in the planning, action, and monitoring process include information that helps to reveal contextual factors that affect student learning and school improvement, including community demographic and perceptual data.	② Educators occasionally poll family and community members on issues the educators think are important.	① Educators do not value data about contextual factors within the home or the larger community that can have an impact on student learning.
Evidence:		
Does the system collect and use data from a wide range of stakeholders for decision making? In my school community . . .		
③ Educators engage representative stakeholders in collecting and using data for decision making.	② Educators solicit feedback from families and community on selected issues to make decisions.	① Educators use only classroom and school-level data to make decisions.
Evidence:		



Tool 2.6, Part D, *Cont.*

System Capacity for Family and Community Rubric

Read each question and select the statement that best describes your school community. Circle the number for that statement. If the answer falls between two numbers, you can use a decimal. Write the evidence on which you base this rating in the open space under the descriptions. Once you have completed this task, be prepared to talk about your ratings with other team members.

Ensuring Continuous Learning		
Taking a systemic approach to engage all who have a role in supporting student learning—educators, families, and community members—in developing the knowledge and skills needed to promote student learning		
Does the system engage family and community members in learning opportunities that are data driven? In my school community . . .		
③	②	①
Educators, families, and community members participate in learning opportunities that are selected and monitored through data-driven processes.	Educators use their personal perceptions to determine appropriate learning opportunities for families and communities.	Educators do not have data to help them make decisions about learning opportunities for family and community.
Evidence:		
Does the system use research-based practices to make decisions about appropriate learning opportunities for family and community members? In my school community . . .		
③	②	①
Educators, families, and community members work together to make decisions about appropriate research-based learning activities.	Educators make decisions about learning opportunities for family and community members that are research-based.	Educators identify appropriate learning opportunities by interest, not research.
Evidence:		



Tool 2.6, Part D, *Cont.*

Does the system ensure that learning opportunities for family and community members are aligned to efforts to support learning at all levels of the system? In my school community . . .

③

Educators, families, and community members work together to build a common understanding about strategies that support learning inside and beyond the classroom.

②

Educators decide what learning opportunities family and community members need to support student learning.

①

Educators are unaware of the need to link learning opportunities for family and community members to student learning.

Evidence:

Does the system provide learning opportunities for family and community members that support collaboration and the active participation of all stakeholders? In my school community . . .

③

Educators, families, and community members work together to provide learning opportunities that promote collaboration and active participation.

②

Educators provide learning opportunities for family and community members that promote collaboration and active participation.

①

Educators receive information about outreach strategies to foster family and community engagement.

Evidence:



Tool 2.6, Part D, Cont.

System Capacity for Family and Community Rubric

Read each question and select the statement that best describes your school community. Circle the number for that statement. If the answer falls between two numbers, you can use a decimal. Write the evidence on which you base this rating in the open space under the descriptions. Once you have completed this task, be prepared to talk about your ratings with other team members.

Building Relationships		
Taking a systemic approach to engage all stakeholders in meaningful interactions to create common understandings about educational expectations and effective ways to support learning		
Does the system provide time, resources, policy, and other structures at all levels to ensure that educators, families, and community members engage in meaningful conversations about student learning and school improvement? In my school community . . .		
③	②	①
Administrators ensure that time, resources, policy, and other district and school structures support educators, families, and community members in engaging in meaningful conversations that support student learning and school improvement.	Educators meet with family and community members to discuss student learning and school improvement.	Educators contact families when student behavior or work habits impede student learning and school improvement.
Evidence:		
Do administrators encourage interactions and relationship building among educators, families, and community members? In my school community . . .		
③	②	①
Administrators give priority to interactions and relationship building among educators, families, and community members.	Educators form relationships with family and community members who come to the school.	Educators have limited interactions with family and community members in ways that form relationships.
Evidence:		



Tool 2.6, Part D, *Cont.*

System Capacity for Family and Community Rubric

Read each question and select the statement that best describes your school community. Circle the number for that statement. If the answer falls between two numbers, you can use a decimal. Write the evidence on which you base this rating in the open space under the descriptions. Once you have completed this task, be prepared to talk about your ratings with other team members.

Responding to Changing Conditions		
Taking a systemic approach to help all involved anticipate responses, analyze situations, explore related research, determine needed resources, and make decisions quickly about effective solutions		
Does the system have a process to engage family and community members in anticipating and recognizing changing conditions that affect the system? In my school community . . .		
③	②	①
Educators, families, and community members work collaboratively to anticipate and recognize changing conditions that can inhibit student learning.	Educators consult family and community members on changing conditions that seem to relate to home or community issues.	Family and community members are not involved in efforts to anticipate and recognize changing conditions.
Evidence:		
Does the system use family and community engagement to innovatively address changing conditions? In my school community . . .		
③	②	①
Educators, families, and community members work together to identify strategies that can be used inside the school or classroom or beyond the school building that address changing conditions.	Educators ask family and community members to support strategies that address changing conditions.	Family and community engagement is not a part of addressing changing conditions.
Evidence:		



Instructions for Tool 2.7

Data Analysis

The collection and use of data is integral to working systemically. It is an ongoing process throughout all five phases of the Working Systemically approach. The types of data collected include information on student performance, processes, perceptions, and demographics. Tool 1.1 provides a sample data report, and Tool 2.6 provides four instruments for collecting additional perceptual data.

This tool provides an organizer for analyzing data. The leadership team analyzes data from public and nonpublic sources and collects additional data as needed. Leadership teams commonly analyze the following types of data:

- Student achievement data (overall data, not individual student reports)
- Student attendance or discipline data
- Policy and process documents
- Surveys (educators, families, and community members)
- Focus groups (educators, families, and community members)
- Demographic data (national, state, and county reporting documents)
- Local community-based or service-agency reported data

Suggested Process for Using Tool 2.7

Estimated time needed: 2 hours for team analysis of data

- Review the data collected and create data summaries.
- Determine the best ways to display the data. Typically, the display will take the form of charts, graphs, and summative statements. Use Tool 1.1 to help make decisions about formatting and presenting the data.
- Give each person a copy of the handout for recording notes and ideas.
- Ask participants to work in pairs or groups of three to look at the data displays and then write on chart paper two questions they have about the data.
- Post the questions.
- Ask participants to read the questions and then discuss them by focusing on what the data indicate about student learning and family and community engagement in their district.
- Use two separate pieces of chart paper to record the major points made about each of the two focus areas: (1) student learning and (2) family and community engagement.
- Use this discussion to link the importance of connecting student learning to family and community engagement.



Tool 2.7

Data Analysis

Use this handout to record notes about the data.

Data Analysis Record

1. After reviewing the data, what two questions do you have?

2. What do the data tell you about . . .

Student Learning

Family and Community Engagement

3. Based on the team's discussion, what links do you see between student learning and family and community engagement?



Instructions for Tool 2.8

Gap Analysis and Shared Vision of the Ideal State

This tool uses the definition provided on page 15 to frame a process for conducting a gap analysis and creating a shared vision of the ideal state. Using these two handouts serves three purposes:

1. Determining how well family and community engagement practices align with what we know from the research and best practice
2. Fostering discussion
3. Helping the team use data to focus their attention on the challenges that need to be addressed

Typically, this tool is used after the team has collected and analyzed data. Tool 2.8 provides a process for conducting the data analysis. Having data summaries at hand may help the team in this process. Moreover, reviewing more detailed explanations of the characteristics on pages 15–18 may help in preparing for the facilitation of this tool.

This tool is divided into two parts:

- **Part A: Gap Analysis**—As the team uses this handout, team members create ratings, review the evidence for their ratings, discuss their responses with others, and come to a common understanding about the gap between current conditions and best practice.
- **Part B: Shared Vision of the Ideal State**—This organizer provides a way for team members to take notes as they conduct the gap analysis and create a shared vision of the ideal state.

Suggested Process for Using Tool 2.8

Suggested Directions for Part A: Gap Analysis

⌚ *Estimated time needed: 45 minutes*

- Make copies of the tool for all meeting participants.
- Use the following steps for Part A: Gap Analysis:
 - Review the directions at the top of the tool and ask each person to complete the survey individually or in groups of two or three.
 - Ask participants to share and explain their ratings. *What evidence supports each rating?*
 - Use these comments to build a strong case for systemically supporting each of the characteristics of effective family and community engagement (see pages 15–18).
 - Record the ratings on chart paper so that everyone can see the lowest- and highest-ranking areas. If there are differences, ask the members to share their rationales for their ratings. Use this information to help the members come to consensus on their ratings.
 - Note statements ranked the lowest, identifying the degree of gap between the lowest- and highest-rated characteristics and levels of support currently in place. These statements are potential problem or challenge areas.



Instructions for Tool 2.8, Cont.

Suggested Process for Using Tool 2.8

Suggested Directions for Part B: Shared Vision of the Ideal State

⌚ **Estimated time needed: 90 minutes**

- Divide the team members into pairs or groups of three and ask participants to use their ratings from the gap analysis, the data they have reviewed, and other team activities to create a single statement that reflects the gap or gaps in level of support for incorporating characteristics of effective family and community engagement into a systemic approach for school improvement.
- Ask each pair or group to write their statement on chart paper.
- Ask the whole team to review the statements each pair or group has written on the chart paper and posted for the group to see.
- Ask team members to find patterns or trends across statements. If helpful, record their responses on chart paper.
- Ask the whole team to use their statements and discussion to create one sentence that best expresses a challenge the team needs to address. Remember that the challenge they are describing needs to be something the team can address that will have a significant impact on student achievement. For example,
Educators, families, and community members do not have a common understanding of the strategies used to promote academic success and, therefore, are not coordinating their efforts to provide the support students need.
- Ask the team to review their challenge statement and consider all they have done to date.
- Divide the team into smaller groups and ask them to create a list of ideas on chart paper about what it would be like if the problem were solved. Post these lists on the wall.
- Give each team member sticky notes. Ask the members to use the sticky notes to mark the ideas that have the greatest importance to them.
- Ask the team to review these marked ideas. Then work with the team to create one sentence that describes the team's shared vision of the ideal state if the problem were solved. This may take several iterations. For example,
The ABC school district has a system to support and ensure that educators, families, and community members work together to build a common understanding about strategies that are used to support students' academic growth, and all stakeholders collaboratively develop strategies to support students' academic growth inside and beyond the school.



Tool 2.8, Part A

Gap Analysis¹⁰

Use the gap analysis chart below to reflect on the effectiveness of family and community engagement in your school community. Each statement describes what districts and schools need to do to implement a systemic approach to school improvement that incorporates effective family and community engagement practices. Read each statement and think about the idea in the statement based on the data the team has reviewed and the discussions among team members. Rate each statement on how well your community is doing and be prepared to talk about the evidence that supports your ratings.

1. Responsibility for student learning is shared by all stakeholders. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 NOT MUCH A WHOLE LOT
2. Support for learning from birth to career is seamless and continuous throughout the school community. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 NOT MUCH A WHOLE LOT
3. Policies and procedures encourage the creation of multiple, dynamic, and complementary learning pathways to support student learning. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 NOT MUCH A WHOLE LOT
4. All stakeholder groups are engaged in developing a supportive culture for learning in both the classroom and the community. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 NOT MUCH A WHOLE LOT
5. School officials ensure that all stakeholders—educator and noneducator—have the capacity to engage with one another to support learning. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 NOT MUCH A WHOLE LOT
6. Family and community engagement efforts are linked to student learning. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 NOT MUCH A WHOLE LOT
7. Educators embrace a philosophy of partnership and share power with family and community members. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 NOT MUCH A WHOLE LOT
8. Family engagement initiatives are comprehensive, strategic, and sustained. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 NOT MUCH A WHOLE LOT

10. Some of the items on this handout are adapted from the description of effective family and community engagement created by the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group (2009).



Tool 2.8, Part B

Shared Vision of the Ideal State

Use this chart to keep notes as team members create a shared vision of the ideal state based on the team's ratings on the gap analysis.

Priorities
Challenge Statement Based on Priorities
Description of What It Would Look Like if Challenge Was Addressed
Shared Vision of the Ideal State



Instructions for Tool 2.9

Sample Summary of Team's Work

During Phase II, the team explores research, analyzes data, identifies challenges to be addressed, and creates a shared vision of the ideal state. Using a simple work summary helps team members track their learning and decisions. This tool provides a sample summary of a leadership team's data analysis and discussions about student performance, stakeholder perspectives, and family and community engagement.

This type of summary can be used any time there is a need to review what has been accomplished.

The following guidelines may be useful in developing a summary of the work:

1. Keep it to one page. Team members need to be able to scan it quickly.
2. Remember to review the text on the sheet orally. If team members are challenged by a print resource, they can participate in the review if they hear what the summary contains.
3. Include a reference to all work the team has done and what has been learned from that work.
4. Create a logical flow that follows the actions taken.
5. Bold key points.
6. Make sure the summary of work highlights the information needed to plan for action in Phase III.

Suggested Process for Using Tool 2.9

Estimated time needed: 1–2 hours to create a work summary

- Review the sample summary provided for ideas you can use.
- Use a blank piece of paper to draft a storyboard (arrange the text for the story you are telling).
- Transfer your ideas to a final draft.
- Share the final document with the team and ask them if the document accurately reflects the work that has been done.
- Ask the team members to share their reactions.
- Help the team members use their reactions to focus their attention on any high-need challenges.



Tool 2.9

Sample Summary of Team's Work

Review the team's accomplishments listed on this sheet.

Oakdale Leadership Team Summary of Our Work to Increase Family and Community Engagement
We learned . . .
• Our children aren't meeting academic expectations and need more support for learning, particularly between 4th and 7th grade. • Different stakeholders describe different experiences and values related to home, school, and community interactions. • Our team has little experience in family and community engagement. • Our strengths are our desire to change, great staff, great families, and supportive community. • Our weaknesses are our district's reliance on random acts of involvement instead of a systemic approach, our limited experience, and our few staff members representing minority populations.
Our efforts can . . .
• Support the needs of ALL our students. • Assist families to help their children be successful for life. • Provide additional resources to support our teachers.
We need to remember . . .
• Just because family members do not act like we expect does not mean they are not interested in supporting the school. • Educators need to move away from doing things to the students' families and move toward doing things with our students' families. • To form relationships, you need to meet one-on-one.
We decided . . .
• We need to provide more resources and support to our students. • We should foster opportunities for families to learn about creating better home-learning conditions for promoting learning beyond the school and for organizing out-of-school efforts. • We should promote shared decision making by involving family and community members in school decisions. • If we want to increase family and community engagement, we have to create opportunities for each person in our school community to see that everyone can benefit from these activities. We need to reach out and touch someone. • We need to know more about how to work with families to create learning opportunities at home.



Instructions for Tool 3.1

Making the Case for Best Practice

As the team begins the planning process, members will be identifying effective strategies and appropriate actions to help them in achieving their shared vision of the ideal state. Often, before they can make these decisions, team members need more information on specific topics, including family and community engagement.

This tool will help team members organize their ideas and promote individual reflection as they explore research briefs or studies, after site visits, or other professional learning opportunities. The tool can be used during discussions or individually.

SEDL also has a number of ready-to-use resources available on its National Center for Family and Community Engagement Web site (<http://www.sedl.org/connections>) that facilitators can use to make the case for best practice, including research syntheses, research briefs, and learning modules.

Suggested Process for Using Tool 3.1

Estimated time needed: 45–60 minutes

- Copy the handout for all participants to use to organize their thoughts and record notes.
- Use any of the following strategies for generating discussion or reflection.
 - Ask participants to read the text, pair with another person, complete the suggested activity on the handout, and identify two issues of importance to share with others.
 - Ask participants to underline or highlight information they did not know or had not thought about before.
 - Ask participants to discuss their thoughts with others around them and then write an important learning on an index card. Ask each member to share the learning on the card with another person and then exchange cards with that person. With the new card in hand, each person should next talk about the learning on the card with a new person. Repeat this process two or three times. At the end of the process, ask volunteers to share what they have learned.



Tool 3.1

Making the Case for Best Practice

Use this handout to organize your thoughts about what you have read, experienced, or discussed.

What have you learned about how family and community engagement can help support each of the following:

- Students
- Schools
- Families
- Community

What strengths in your community do you want to draw on as you plan for action?

What one overarching idea do you feel needs to be incorporated into your plan?

What strategies and actions need to be included in the plan to ensure that the most effective family and community engagement practices are used to support student learning?

What additional information do you need to help support family and community engagement within a systemic approach to improvement?



Instructions for Tool 3.2

Planning for Communications

One of the most commonly neglected aspects of planning for action is creating a communication plan. Creating a communication plan serves multiple purposes:

- Making sure everyone in the community knows what is going on.
- Developing commitment from all stakeholder groups.
- Building interest and motivation to get engaged in supporting student learning.
- Making expectations public.

Even though communication plans need to be designed to meet a local context, this tool provides guidance on important issues to consider.

Suggested Process for Using Tool 3.2

⌚ *Estimated time needed: 20 minutes*

- Provide each team member with a copy of the handout.
- Review the concepts on the handout and encourage team members to use it as a guide as they create their communication plan.



Tool 3.2

Planning for Communications

Use the following information to guide the development of a communication plan.

Helpful Hints in Developing a Communication Plan

Create a plan for communicating your team's message using team members' diverse knowledge to reach a variety of audiences.

Examples of Key Information

- Team's shared vision of the ideal state
- Team goals
- Team accomplishments
- Team membership
- Specific opportunities or events
- Team history
- How to get involved

Strategies for Successful Communications

- Build relationships with key people to ensure that your message gets out.
- Keep people informed on a regular basis—don't just give one-time information.
- Follow up to ensure that the information is being distributed or presented in the way you expected.
- Pay attention to the amount of information you provide—short enough to keep people's interest, but long enough to convey important details.
- Use a variety of strategies to reach your audience. Don't rely on just one method.
- Keep track of which strategies work and which strategies don't.

Communicating Your Message to the Public

- Press releases
- Brochures
- Video
- Web site
- Articles or letters to the newspaper
- Announcements in religious bulletins
- Restaurant placemats
- School marquee sign
- School newspaper
- Banners and signs
- T-shirts and bumper stickers
- Radio and TV public service ads



Instructions for Tool 4.1

Leadership for Family and Community Engagement

While taking action is key to implementation, in Phase IV assessing action is also important. As the team begins to take action, the focus and support leaders provide ensures that the plan is implemented and stays focused on achieving the shared vision of the ideal state. This tool provides insight into actions that leaders can take to ensure that the team goals are met. As the work unfolds, informal and formal leaders from all stakeholder groups take responsibility for different parts of the work.

Helping all leaders to develop effective leadership actions is one of the keys to effective implementation. This chart helps leaders to focus their actions on strategies that foster effective family and community engagement. It can be used for individual reflection or group discussion.

Note: Because the plan developed for school improvement may have allocated greater support to areas of highest need, the strategies and actions in the plan may not direct resources and efforts equally to all of the characteristics of family and community engagement. The responses on the handout should reflect the plan's areas of focus.

Suggested Process for Using Tool 4.1

 ***Estimated time needed: 60 minutes***

- Provide a copy of this tool to each team member.
- Ask team members to complete the handout individually, in pairs, or in groups. Remind team members of the importance of having evidence to share along with descriptions of work progress.
- Lead the team in a discussion about what they have recorded.
- Use this discussion to strengthen the team's efforts and determine areas that need further attention or refocus.



Tool 4.1

Leadership for Family and Community Engagement¹¹

Consider each of the statements about leadership below. Then, record your answers to the questions in the space provided.

Leadership Actions			
To engage family and community members in systemic improvement efforts, leaders need to • communicate clear expectations about the processes and procedures being used to foster engagement, • build capacity of all involved to do the work, and • monitor and review progress toward achieving the shared vision of the ideal state. Use the following chart to record information about the team's efforts to communicate clear expectations, build capacity, and monitor and review progress for each of the characteristics of effective family and community engagement. When you have finished, take a moment to decide the areas of strength and areas of challenge for leaders in fostering effective family and community engagement.			
	Communication of Clear Expectations	Building Capacity	Monitoring and Reviewing Progress
Shared responsibility for student learning			
Actions taken to support			
Evidence of impact from actions			
Lessons learned from actions			
Seamless and continuous support for learning from birth to career			
Actions taken to support			
Evidence of impact from actions			
Lessons learned from actions			

11. The characteristics used in this handout are adapted from the description of effective family and community engagement created by the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group (2009).



Tool 4.1, Cont.

	Communication of Clear Expectations	Building Capacity	Monitoring and Reviewing Progress
Creation of varied pathways to learning			
Actions taken to support			
Evidence of impact from actions			
Lessons learned from actions			
Supportive culture for learning in and beyond the classroom			
Actions taken to support			
Evidence of impact from actions			
Lessons learned from actions			



Tool 4.1, Cont.

	Communication of Clear Expectations	Building Capacity	Monitoring and Reviewing Progress
Opportunities and processes to foster advocacy for student learning			
Actions taken to support			
Evidence of impact from actions			
Lessons learned from actions			
Quality education and learning opportunities for every child			
Actions taken to support			
Evidence of impact from actions			
Lessons learned from actions			



Instructions for Tool 5.1

Family and Community Engagement Implementation Assessment

In Phase V, the team transitions from taking action to reflecting on the overall implementation and impact of improvement efforts. The tools in this section provide two ways to think about the overall effectiveness of the plan and the various ways in which multiple stakeholders have been engaged in increasing student achievement.

This rubric can help individual team members as well as the whole team determine if their implementation strategies and actions align to the characteristics of effective family and community engagement. Reviewing the descriptions on pages 15–18 may help in preparing to use this tool.

Suggested Process for Using Tool 5.1

⊕ ***Estimated time needed: 90 minutes***

- Provide team members with a copy of the rubric and ask them to determine where their system falls on the continuum for each characteristic. The left side of the continuum is labeled “Ideal.” The right side is labeled “Unacceptable.”
- Lead the team members in a discussion of their rankings. By engaging in a discussion of what they consider to be acceptable and unacceptable, members will create a common understanding of their expectations and help further define what they want to accomplish.
- Use this information to determine future needs.



Tool 5.1

Family and Community Engagement Implementation Assessment¹²

The following statements describe various stages of implementing the characteristics of effective family and community engagement. Under each statement, there are five descriptions of varying degrees of implementation. The statement to the far left is an “Ideal” level of implementation. The statement to the far right is an “Unacceptable” level of implementation. Circle the number of the description that best reflects your system.

Family and Community Engagement				
1. Responsibility —Educational, family, and community leaders work together to establish shared responsibility for student learning and school improvement.				
Ideal				Unacceptable
①	②	③	④	⑤
Educators, families, and community members build a common understanding about each person's role in helping students meet educational expectations and help each other fulfill those roles.	Educators, families, and community members state that they agree and commit to a shared responsibility for helping students meet expectations.	A family and community committee offers suggestions about appropriate home- and community-based activities that can support student learning.	Educators hold periodic meetings to talk to families about student learning needs.	Educators hold themselves responsible for classroom instruction and hold families responsible for homework.
2. Lifetime Support —Educational, family, and community leaders create formal and informal structures that promote seamless and continuous support for learning from birth to career.				
Ideal				Unacceptable
①	②	③	④	⑤
Educators, families, and community members use data to develop systemwide structures—such as policy, procedures, and resource allocation—that bridge learning in the home, school, and community from birth to career.	Elementary school, middle school, and high school staff use data to help them work across grade levels to align student learning from K–12.	Educators meet with families several times a year to share performance data and information about what students are learning and the strategies teachers use in the classroom.	Counselors provide informational materials to help families understand their children's performance on statewide testing.	School-, family-, and community-based efforts to support student learning happen sporadically and are not intentional or coordinated.

12. The characteristics used on this handout are adapted from the description of effective family and community engagement created by the National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group (2009).



Tool 5.1, Cont.

3. Pathways for Learning—Educators, families, and community members work together to create a wider awareness and appreciation of the varied ways each person can support student learning.

Ideal				Unacceptable
①	②	③	④	⑤
Educators, families, and community members work collaboratively to raise awareness of the various pathways to student learning and create structures that support using these pathways.	To address the needs of the most challenged students, teachers work with families to identify additional learning pathways in school or at home.	The district provides educators with targeted professional development on strategies and new ways to support student learning.	Educators, families, and community members engage in activities several times a year to raise awareness of and direct attention to the various pathways for learning.	There are occasional efforts to address the individual learning needs of students.

4. Culture—Educators, families, and community members foster a supportive and engaging culture that encourages learning in all settings.

Ideal				Unacceptable
①	②	③	④	⑤
All stakeholders work together to create home-school-community partnerships that encourage community-wide support for student learning and school improvement.	A select team provides feedback on the planned strategies the school intends to use to connect learning experiences in the classroom to learning experiences beyond the classroom.	The local parent-educator organization holds workshops several times a year to help families learn about ways to support their children's learning.	Educators hold periodic meetings with families to share information on classroom instructional strategies.	Few home-school-community partnership opportunities are available to support learning.



Tool 5.1, Cont.

5. Advocacy—Educators, families, and community members are advocates for student learning and school improvement.

Ideal				Unacceptable
①	②	③	④	⑤
By focusing on effective engagement practices, educators, families, and community members form a united voice for systemic improvement.	Educators, families, and community members voice their belief that supporting student learning and school improvement is important.	Educators state their belief about the importance of supporting student learning and school improvement.	The parent-educator organization provides information on strategies families can use to advocate for their children's learning.	Advocacy is not encouraged and in some cases considered inappropriate.

6. Quality Education—Educators, families, and community members create the support structures that are necessary for every child to have a quality educational experience.

Ideal				Unacceptable
①	②	③	④	⑤
Educators, families, and community members work to create systemwide accountability and monitoring structures that support a quality educational experience for all children.	Educators, families, and community members implement strategies to support effective learning experiences for all children.	Educators create policies and procedures to support effective learning experiences.	District supervisors provide workshops for family members on strategies to increase student performance.	Some students are expected to fail.



Instructions for Tool 5.2

Reflection Guide

In Phase V, team members broaden their review to assess and reflect on the larger scope of their improvement efforts. They ask themselves the following questions:

- Have the improvement efforts allowed the team to achieve its shared vision of the ideal state?
- Have the improvement efforts created a systemwide increase in meaningful family and community engagement?

To answer these questions, the leadership team needs to review its progress through three lenses:

- Measurable results (quantitative and qualitative) in student learning
- Interactions among team members and with other stakeholders
- Methods or processes used to accomplish goals

Using Tool 5.1 before using this tool will create a stronger reflective process.

Suggested Process for Using Tool 5.2



Estimated time needed: 90 minutes

- Give each team member a copy of the tool.
- Ask them to work individually or in pairs to answer the questions on the tool.
- Ask each team member to use two colors of highlighters to mark the answers seen as strengths (color one) and those seen as challenges (color two).
- Engage the team in a discussion about the perceived strengths and challenges, prompting members to provide evidence for their statements.



Tool 5.2

Reflection Guide

Consider the following questions as you reflect on your progress toward achieving your shared vision of the ideal state.

Reflecting on Outcomes and Progress

Implementation

1. During this current school year, have staff members effectively carried out their assignments related to the improvement effort as planned?
2. Have leaders effectively monitored the work done and provided timely direction and support to the team members carrying out the improvement work at all levels of the system?
3. What challenges or difficulties did the leadership team encounter while implementing the improvement plan and monitoring implementation?
4. What successes or accomplishments did team members experience while implementing the improvement plan and monitoring implementation?
5. What insights have leaders gained this year about implementing and monitoring the improvement plan, and how can they use those insights when planning for the coming year?

Impact

6. Has the implementation of the improvement plan achieved the intended outcomes as defined by the leadership team in Phase III: Planning Action?
7. What changes in student achievement scores, both systemwide and in each of the participating schools, have occurred since the beginning of the improvement work?
8. What changes have occurred in the daily work at the district, school, and classroom levels and in the homes of students and the larger community that support school improvement and family and community engagement?

References

Blank, M. J., Berg, A. C., & Melaville, A. (2006). ***Growing community schools: The role of cross-boundary leadership***. Washington, DC: Coalition for Community Schools. Retrieved from <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CBLFinal.pdf>

This report profiles 11 community programs by using their program evaluations. The authors describe the effectiveness of cross-boundary leadership for large-scale, community-wide education reform strategies used in a wide range of community contexts. The smallest district had 2,100 students; the largest, 400,000. Evaluation data sources include school achievement data and comparison achievement data from schools not participating in this effort as well as surveys and interviews.

Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J. Q. (2010). ***Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago***. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

This book provides an in-depth look at the findings from a longitudinal study conducted over a 7-year period with 100 schools demonstrating substantial academic growth and a second set of 100 comparable schools not showing academic growth. The authors identify factors that supported and detracted from academic growth.

Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. (2005). ***School improvement planning: What's missing? A Center policy report***. Los Angeles, CA: Author.

In this report of a mixed-methods review of state and local education guidance and policy to support school improvement, the authors explore the processes used by each agency to foster comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approaches to address barriers to student learning.

Corcoran, T., & Christman, J. B. (2002). ***The limits and contradictions of systemic reform: The Philadelphia story***. Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED476940>

This document presents the findings of a multiyear case study using mixed-methods evaluation reports with comparison achievement data. Data sources include teacher survey data (pre- and post-), student demographic reports, and qualitative data from 49 schools (26 elementary, 11 middle, and 12 high school) in 14 clusters. Data collected include interviews (teachers, principals, parents, and outside partners), observations (classrooms, students, small learning community meetings, professional development sessions, leadership team meetings), a review of school improvement documentation, multiyear case study research in a subset of 25 schools (13 elementary, 5 middle, and 7

high schools), interviews with central office staff and cluster staff, and observations of other meetings and events.

Cowan, D., Joyner, S., & Beckwith, S. (2008). *Working systemically in action: A guide for facilitators*. Austin, TX: SEDL.

This guide was produced by a team of SEDL staff who drew upon more than three decades of educational school research and theory. The Working Systemically approach focuses on the key components and competencies at all levels of the local educational system to increase student learning. The guide gives technical assistance providers a framework and tools to help schools and districts establish a culture of continuous inquiry and collaboration as well as develop structures and leadership roles necessary to support and sustain both student and staff learning.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *Performance counts: Assessment systems that support high-quality learning*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers. Retrieved from http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2010/Performance_Counts_Assessment_Systems_2010.pdf

This white paper describes what a student assessment system could look like if built in accordance with the principles and best practices found in current educational research and effective educational systems in the United States and high-achieving nations around the world.

Datnow, A., Lasky, S. G., Stringfield, S. C., & Teddlie, C. (2005). Systemic integration for educational reform in racially and linguistically diverse contexts: A summary of the evidence. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 10(4), 441–453.

This synthesis summarizes the findings from 50 research reports published from 1983 to 2003, with the majority of the studies from the mid-1990s to the present, on factors that support improved learning for racial and linguistic minorities. Studies include both quantitative (quasi-experimental studies that used matched control designs) and qualitative studies (surveys, longitudinal studies, and rigorous ethnographies).

Dearing, E., Kreider, H., Simpkins, S., & Weiss, H. B. (2006). Family involvement in school and low-income children's literacy performance: Longitudinal associations between and within families. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98, 653–664.

This longitudinal correlational study examined school-based literacy activities for 300 low-income K–5 students and their families. Activities included open house events, family-teacher conferences, other school meetings, and visiting and volunteering in the classroom. A digest of this study is located at <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp>.

Duncan, A. (2009, June 3). *Secretary Arne Duncan testifies on the fiscal year 2010 budget request before the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees*. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/secretary-arne-duncan-testifies-fiscal-year-2010-budget-request-house-and-senate-appro>

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan presented this speech before the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees of the U.S. Congress on June 3, 2009.

Epstein, J. L. (2007). Connections count: Improving family and community involvement in secondary schools. *Principal Leadership*, 8(2), 16–22. Retrieved from <http://www.principals.org/portals/0/content/56190.pdf>

In this brief article, the author summarizes the collected research reports of the National Network of Partnerships, a long-standing family engagement model that includes routine data collection from participants.

Fege, A. F. (2006). Getting Ruby a quality public education: Forty-two years of building the demand for quality public schools through parental and public involvement. *Harvard Educational Review*, 76(4), 570–586. Retrieved from <http://www.hepg.org/her/abstract/196>

The author traces the history of parental and public engagement in sustaining equity in public education and presents an analysis of strengths and challenges within the U.S. educational system to achieve equity in education.

Ferguson, C, Jordan, C., Wood, L., & Rodriguez, V. (2006). *Beyond the building: A facilitation guide for school, family, and community connections* [Multimedia Toolkit] Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

This multimedia toolkit draws heavily on research to help educators, families, and community organizers incorporate research-based practices into engagement activities.

Glickman, N. J., & Scally, C. P. (2008). Can community and education organizing improve inner-city schools? *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 30(5), 557–577. Retrieved from <http://comm-org.wisc.edu/papers2005/glickmanscally/glickmanscally.htm>

The authors report on their use of indicators to assess the effectiveness of “education organizing” in improving schools and communities by directing resources and attention to significant problems, creating social capital, fostering leadership among all stakeholders, creating a wider power base for policymaking, and stressing greater public accountability. Data collected include case studies, interviews, surveys, school data analysis, and program evaluations.

Henderson, A., Jacob, B., Kernan-Schloss, A., & Raimondo, B. (2004). *The case for parent leadership. Lexington, KY: Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence*. Retrieved from http://www.prichardcommittee.org/Portals/1059/CPL/Case_Final.pdf

This report serves dual purposes: (1) describing findings and recommendations from a long-term family engagement project, the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, and (2) providing practical suggestions to help others use the findings and recommendations. At the time of publication, more than 1,100 parents had been trained in this process.

Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Retrieved from <http://www.sedl.org/connections>

This review of the research examines the growing evidence that family and community connections with schools make a difference in student success. The review synthesizes

51 studies on the impact of family and community involvement on student achievement, and recommends effective strategies to connect schools, families, and community.

Henderson, A. T., Mapp, K. L., Johnson, V. R., & Davies, D. (2007). ***Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family-school partnerships***. New York, NY: The New Press.

The authors for this guide use decades of their personal research as well as the research of others to create practical tips and tools for implementing effective family and community engagement practices.

Higgins, M., Young, L., Weiner, J., & Wlodarczyk, S. (2009–2010). Leading teams of leaders: What helps team member learning? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 91(4), 41–45.

Based on their multiyear study of 26 Connecticut leadership teams, the authors identify effective leadership strategies for using a team approach to support school improvement. Survey findings focus on team processes and strategies.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (2005, March 22). ***Final performance report for OERI Grant #R305T010673: The social context of parental involvement: A path to enhanced achievement***. Presented to Project Monitor, Institute of Educational Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/peabody/family-school/Reports.html>

In this report, the authors use cumulative survey response data to track the impact of a model for implementing meaningful family engagement. The authors trace the changes in parental perspectives and impact on student learning and school improvement across a 3-year span with 4 cohorts of schools. Cohort 1 included 4 elementary schools and 2 middle schools with 877 parents participating from 102 different classrooms. Cohort 2 included 3 elementary schools and 2 middle schools with 495 parents participating from 56 different classrooms. Cohort 3 included 6 elementary schools and 2 middle schools with 421 parents and 421 students participating from 63 different classrooms. Cohort 4 included 5 elementary schools and 4 middle schools with 358 parents and 358 students participating from 75 different classrooms. Schools represented a range of population groups commonly labeled as high risk.

Houtenville, A. J., & Conway, K. S. (2008). Parental effort, school resources, and student achievement. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 43(2), 437–453. Retrieved from http://www.unh.edu/news/docs/Conway_May08.pdf

Using data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), the authors used household product and time-allocation theory to estimate the value-added education production function and analyze family involvement as an input to school improvement. Survey and achievement data were collected from 24,599 eighth grade students from 815 public schools and 237 private schools as well as from parents, teachers, and school administrators. Parental effort equations are also estimated as a function of child, parent, household, and school characteristics.

Jordan, C., Averett, A., Elder, J., Orozco, E., & Rudo, Z. (2000). ***Creating collaborative action teams: Working together for student success*** [Multimedia Toolkit]. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

This toolkit was created by a collaborative team of community organizers and educators and provides hands-on-tools and resources to help in the implementation of the Collaborative Action Team process.

Mapp, K. L. (2003). Having their say: Parents describe why and how they are engaged in their children's learning. *The School Community Journal*, 13(1), 35–64. Retrieved from <http://www.peoriatitlei.org/dist150/documents/Article.pdf>

For this study, the author identified an urban K–5 school (220 students) where at least 90% of the parents participated in one or more of the home- or school-based family engagement activities. Using in-depth one-on-one interviews, the author asked 18 parents how and why they were involved in their children's education and what factors influenced their participation.

Marschall, M. J. (2006). Parent involvement and educational outcomes for Latino students. *Review of Policy Research*, 23(5), 1053–1076. Retrieved from http://www.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/4/3/4/2/pages143420/p143420-1.php

The author explores methods that schools and educators use to reach out to families, the effectiveness of these efforts, and the impact of effective efforts on family participation. She uses multiple types of data to capture the perspectives of stakeholders from 160 schools with high Latino populations. Data include community and family issues from the National Association of Latino Elected Officials, information on the demographics of students and schools from Chicago Public Schools and the Illinois State Board of Education, and teacher viewpoints from survey data collected by the Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Musti-Rao, S., & Cartledge, G. (2004). Making home an advantage in the prevention of reading failure: Strategies for collaborating with parents in urban schools. *Preventing School Failure*, 48(4), 15–21.

The authors investigate 2 sets of teachers and parents in 2 different schools to determine how the collaborative approach the teachers are using with parents affects the alignment of teacher and parent perceptions of student achievement. The authors then examine what strategies and actions fostered meaningful family involvement in a child's education.

National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group. (2009). ***Recommendations for federal policy***. Retrieved from http://www.hfrp.org/content/download/3444/98778/file/FI_FamilyEngagementRecsForFederalPolicy.pdf

The authors provide a brief review of current research, define characteristics of effective family and community engagement practices based on research, and present policy recommendations based on this information.

National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group. (2010, August 13). [Unpublished chart meeting handout]. Washington, DC: Author.

This chart was part of a handout used for discussion in a National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group meeting held August 13, 2010.

National Institute for Literacy. (2008). *Developing early literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel. A scientific synthesis of early literacy development and implications for intervention*. Jessup, MD: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.nifl.gov/publications/pdf/NELPReport09.pdf>

This report synthesizes the results of a meta-analysis of hundreds of research reports to describe scientific evidence on the development of early literacy skills in children from birth to age 5.

Read, T. (2008). *Closing the achievement gap—School, community, family connections*. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.aecf.org/~media/PublicationFiles/5Connections_r10.pdf

This publication includes case studies of the Harlem Children's Zone Practitioners Institute's programs in low-income communities in California, Colorado, and Texas. The author presents the results of long-term family and community engagement activities and makes recommendations based on the findings.

Redding, S., Langdon, J., Meyer, J., & Sheley, P. (2004). *The effects of comprehensive parent engagement on student learning outcomes*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA. Retrieved from <http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/publications-resources/the-effects-of-comprehensive-parent-engagement-on-student-learning-outcomes>

In a comparison study of 129 high-poverty elementary schools and corresponding control schools, the authors found a correlation between family attention to learning and student achievement. They attribute this correlation to the relationships that school staff and families establish. The authors state that the cumulative effect of purposeful, regular, and timely interactions between teachers and families creates a "greater reservoir of trust and respect, increased social capital for children, and a school community more supportive of each child's school success" (p. 6).

Resto, W., & Alston, A. (2006). *Parent involvement at selected ready schools*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers. Retrieved from http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/Parent_Involvement_at_Ready_Schools.pdf

This case study examined the efforts of 4 schools and 1 regional organization identified as effective in implementing family activities that promote children's readiness for school. These sites are located in culturally and linguistically diverse low-income communities in Connecticut, Indiana, Oregon, Washington, and West Virginia. Data were collected through family involvement surveys and telephone interviews.

Sheldon, S. B. (2007). Improving student attendance with school, family, and community partnerships. *Journal of Educational Research*, 100(5), 267–275.

This 2-year comparison study investigated the effects of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) program on student attendance by comparing schools using the program with similar non-NNPS schools. The study compared 69 Ohio elementary schools that had been using NNPS materials for 3 to 4 years with 69 non-NNPS schools with similar demographics. Across the 69 NNPS schools, student demographics were more than 80% low economic status; 69.9% White, 24.8% African American, and 5.4% Hispanic; and 29.4% large urban, 23.5% small urban, 23.5% suburban, and 23.5% rural. Data collection included NNPS action team reports, publicly accessible data from the Ohio Department of Education that included the percentage of fourth graders passing reading and mathematics state assessments, enrollment and attendance data, and per-pupil funding allocations.

Stewart, E. B. (2008). School structural characteristics, student effort, peer associations, and parental involvement: The influence of school- and individual-level factors on academic achievement. *Education and Urban Society*, 40(2), 179–204.

For this probability study, the researchers investigated the relationships between academic achievement and individual-level and school structural predictors. The authors used a statistical model on a select set of data—10th grade students, teachers, school administrators, and families—from the second wave of the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) survey collection (1990). Data collection methods included participant interviews every 2 years, student reports, and school descriptive information from print and interviews. The study included 11,999 students attending 715 high schools with an average of 17 students per school. The sample demographics were 53% female and 47% male, and 70% White, 12% African American, 9.6% Latino, 7.2% Asian, and 1.2% Native American.

Weiss, H., Little, P., Bouffard, S. M., Deschenes, S. N., & Malone, H. J. (2009). Strengthen what happens outside school to improve what happens inside. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(8), 592–596. Retrieved from <http://www.hfrp.org/content/download/3362/97494/file/StrengthenWhatHappensOutsideSchool.pdf>

The authors provide research-based recommendations for implementing out-of-school learning that complements other academic supports for students.