

Promoting Equity in Education Through Family Engagement

This fact sheet is designed to complement the **Promoting Equity in Education Through Family Engagement** video, produced by Formed Families Forward, family partner to the Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports project. The video features families, students and educators who offer strategies for improving educational equity through strong family-school collaborations.

The **goal of equity** in Virginia is to eliminate the predictability of student outcomes based on race, gender, zip code, ability, socio-economic status, and/or languages spoken at home.

“Equity in education is not just important, it’s fundamental. It is core to the mission of a system of public education. We have to center equity in everything that we do when it comes to building a system that delivers high quality public education. Now, more than ever, equity is critical.”

-Leah Walker, Director of Equity,
Virginia Department of Education

Equality vs. Equity in Education:

- **Equality** means treating every student the same.
- **Equity** requires putting systems and structures in place so each student has the differentiated, high quality academic, behavioral and social emotional supports for their individual needs to maximize their potential.

Schools can increase equitable educational opportunities using a structured approach to family engagement. The approach is built on a framework for effective family engagement created by VTSS.

Positive Relationships

- Get to know the cultures, identities, and backgrounds of families.
- Positive relationships help families open up about their preferences and needs.
- Be open and honest with families to build trust.

Multi-Dimensional Communication

- Use two-way communication adapted to the needs of each family.
- Use scripts and flowcharts as guides for sensitive conversations.
- Accommodate the diverse language needs of families in your division.

Collaborative Problem Solving

- Bring families into the decision-making process early.
- Be there for parents so you can solve problems together.
- Build trust in relationships to make it easier to work through issues and concerns.
- Listen well and make the effort to ensure students have what they need to succeed.

Leadership

- Set tone and culture for districts, schools and classrooms consciously and deliberately.
- Lead in a way that sends a message to the community that your school values all students.
- Make it clear to families that their concerns and ideas are welcome.

Empowering Families

- Explicitly say to families that they are the experts on their children.
- Actively encourage families to add their voices at every level of the school system.
- Be receptive and open-minded to insights and ideas families bring to the table.

Multi-Tiered Supports

- Use two-way communication adapted to the needs of each family.
- Use scripts and flowcharts as guides for sensitive conversations.
- Accommodate the diverse language needs of families in your division.

Data-Based Decision Making

- Review academic, behavior and attendance data to narrow focus and plan effective responses.
- Use charts and graphs as visual aids in planning strategies.
- Involve families in understanding and making decisions about data.
- Use data to find out who is not engaged so you can reach out and involve them.