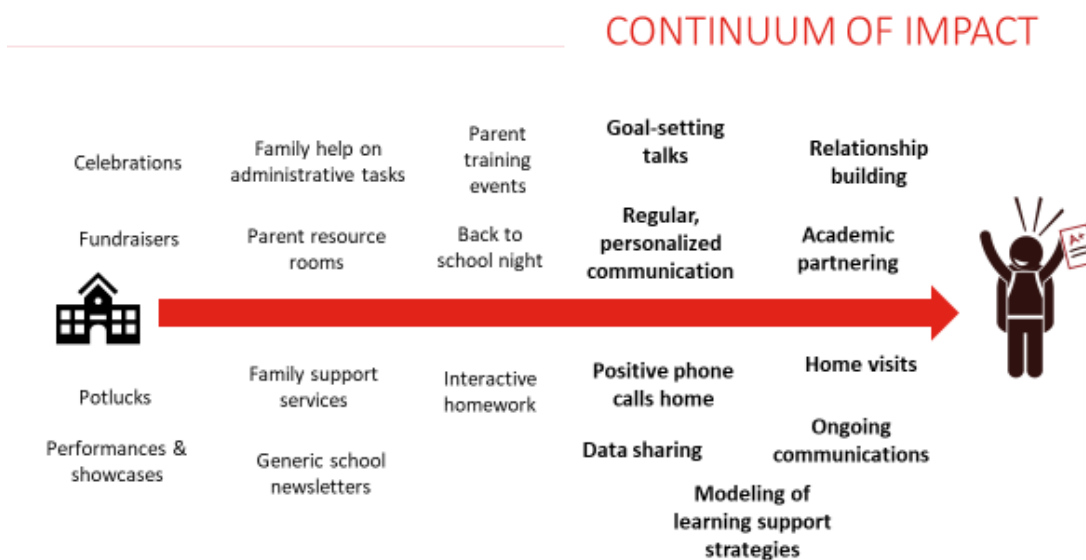


# Family, School, and Community Partnerships

## Strategy Guide 2.0

### Strategy Vision and Description

In this guide, we define family, school, and community partnerships (FSCP) as *families, early childhood programs, schools, and communities actively partnering to develop, implement, and evaluate effective and equitable practices to improve educational outcomes for children and youth* (Colorado Department of Education, 2020). Over 55 years of research indicate the level of impact that various FSCP activities and initiatives have on student outcomes. The graphic below (Flamboyant Foundation, 2021) outlines activities that have the highest direct impact on student outcomes.



Research has shown that the following components support a comprehensive school-level FSCP program. The following National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (Parent Teacher Association, 2022) are ways to categorize FSCP activities and initiatives to ensure you have comprehensive partnerships at your site:

1. Welcoming All Families into the School Community
2. Communicating Effectively
3. Supporting Student Success
4. Speaking Up for Every Child
5. Sharing Power
6. Collaborating with the Community

The remainder of this strategy guide includes information about how to infuse stakeholder feedback throughout school policies and procedures while also including FSCP as a critical school improvement strategy on the Unified Improvement Plan.

## Evidence Base

ESSA defines levels of research based on the quality of the study (Levels 1-4). CDE requires that schools and districts identify the research base for strategies that they select for their Unified Improvement Plans, and for applications for school improvement funds in the EASI application.

The research on **Family, School, and Community Partnerships** that is cited here meets the threshold for **ESSA Level 1-3**.

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## Necessary Preconditions

Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP) are a foundational strategy that should be integrated into all aspects of the improvement planning process and should also be woven throughout the Unified Improvement Plan as an essential school improvement strategy.

The Colorado Department of Education identified four foundational Essential Elements of systemic, sustainable, and scalable partnerships:

- Create an Inclusive Culture
- Build Trusting Relationships
- Design Capacity-Building Opportunities
- Dedicate Necessary Resources

Each of these elements has a set of [corresponding rubrics](#) to help schools prioritize areas of improvement. Consider completing these rubrics with a team of stakeholders (eg. the School Accountability Committee) to inform the Core Components outlined below.

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## Contextual Fit

**Family, School, and Community Partnership strategies are appropriate for all schools and districts.** Family and community voice on annual plans, policies, and compacts are mandated in state and federal education legislation. Similarly, schools with a Turnaround or Priority Improvement performance framework are required to have FSCP on their Unified Improvement Plan, either as a Major Improvement Strategy or somewhere in their action plan.

The starting points identified in the pre-conditions above should determine your implementation plan and priorities listed in the core components, elements, and activities below.

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## Core Components, Elements & Activities

The National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (PTA, 2022) are a research-based typology, or schema, that help schools categorize partnership activities and initiatives. In order to have a comprehensive family, school, and community partnership program in your school, all six of the National Standards should be represented throughout the Unified Improvement Plan. Each core element below includes questions for a leadership team or school accountability committee to discuss and an example of a Promising Partnership Practice. [This website](#) has hundreds of Promising Partnership Practices, each one aligned with the National Standards.

**Core Component 1: Welcoming All Families into the School Community**

*The school treats families as valued partners in their child’s education and facilitates a sense of belonging in the school community.*

Elements or Activities	Description
Build a Community of Belonging	<p>Trusting relationships between families and staff positively impact students but take time, training, and resources. School staff should learn about families and foster respectful attitudes. This may be as simple as knowing the names of students’ parents, siblings, and pets or more complex, such as participating in equity trainings.</p> <p>School leaders may facilitate opportunities for restoration and connection, especially with families and students that are historically marginalized. When drafting an action plan, use culturally and linguistically responsive engagement practices. Families are more likely to partner with their children’s school when they receive a personal invitation to do so.</p> <p>As a team, discuss the following question: When families engage with the school, do they feel respected, understood, and connected to the school community?</p> <p>Promising Partnership Practice: <a href="#">Environmental Scan</a></p>
Create an Inclusive Environment	<p>Building leaders should encourage school staff to see engaging all families as part of their responsibilities; a must-do rather than a nice-to-do. Consider creating both an accessible, family-friendly school building <i>and</i> virtual space. Ask for families’ and students’ feedback on building signing, clear protocols at the front office, and ease of using the schools’ website and portals.</p> <p>Track family engagement data and regularly examine these data to identify gaps in access. Learn about and remove barriers for families to participate fully through home visits, surveys, and individual outreach.</p> <p>As a team, discuss the following question: Do the school’s efforts encourage engagement with and among the diversity of families in the community?</p> <p>Promising Partnership Practice: <a href="#">Newcomer Inclusiveness and Trusting Relationships</a></p>

**Core Component 2: Communicating Effectively**

*The school supports staff to engage in proactive, timely, and two-way communication so that all families can easily understand and contribute to their child’s educational experience.*

Elements or Activities	Description
Exchange Information	<p>Communicating effectively begins with school staff learning about and meeting families’ communication preferences. Address access by providing interpretation, translation, and/or accommodations at meetings, during events, and in written communication. Coordinate</p>

Between School and Families	<p>information-sharing across communication outlets and have a communication policy in place that both families and staff understand.</p> <p>Closing the feedback loop is essential to establishing and maintaining trust between home and school. When school staff gather family input, report back with how input was used. Foster transparency and enable families to follow-up.</p> <p>As a team, discuss the following question: Are families able to receive and share information in culturally and linguistically sustaining ways?</p> <p>Promising Partnership Practice: <a href="#">SMS Surveys and Individual Outreach</a></p>
Facilitate Parent-Teacher Communication	<p>Co-develop communication expectations with families and staff. Consider having the School Accountability Committee work on these expectations as a special project. Provide time, training, and resources for parent-teacher communication. Family engagement liaisons may be able to help facilitate communication with linguistically diverse families. Solicit teacher and family feedback on how communication is going and what could be improved.</p> <p>As a team, discuss the following question: Does the school promote communication between families and teachers?</p> <p>Promising Partnership Practice: <a href="#">Communicating through Seesaw</a></p>

**Core Component 3: Supporting Student Success**

*The school builds the capacity of families and educators to continuously collaborate to support students' academic, social, and emotional learning.*

Elements or Activities	Description
Partner for Student Success	<p>School leadership should support educators to partner with families and students to set social, emotional, and academic goals. Provide an understandable and accurate picture of student progress, using multiple measures (classwork, rubrics, observations, assessments, etc.)</p> <p>Ensure accessible, regular, two-way communication about student learning and wellbeing.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Colorado Academic Standards Community Guides</a> are a helpful resource for families to understand grade-level expectations and how to support learning at home. Consider distributing these guides during parent-teacher conferences, at back-to-school night, or at other family events.</p> <p>As a team, discuss the following question: Are families, students, and educators on the same page about how students are progressing?</p> <p>Promising Partnership Practice: <a href="#">GET Togethers</a></p>

<p>Support Learning by Engaging Families</p>	<p>Get to know students and families and their strengths in order to optimize student learning and family engagement beyond the school day. Provide families guidance and activities to support social, emotional, and academic learning at home. Ensure that families have the materials needed to complete assignments, such as school supplies, books, and manipulatives. Consider using <a href="#">TIPS Interactive Homework</a>, a research-based initiative linked to the Colorado Academic Standards, as an initiative to encourage learning at home.</p> <p>Invite families to contribute to classroom learning, including allowing families to observe instruction to support learning at home. Families may be able to volunteer in the school (reading with struggling students), for the school (compiling learning kits), or as an audience member (at a student showcase or performance).</p> <p>As a team, discuss the following question: Are families valued partners in their children’s learning at home and at school?</p> <p>Promising Partnership Practice: <a href="#">Vaughn Monthly Parent Math Academy</a></p>
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**Core Component 4: Speaking Up for Every Child**

*The school affirms family and student expertise and advocacy so that all students are treated fairly and have access to relationships and opportunities that will support their success.*

Elements or Activities	Description
<p>Understand how to Navigate the School System</p>	<p>School leaders should build staffs’ skills to build trust and problem-solve with students and families. Connect families to resources that address their questions or concerns. Make school staff and families aware of conflict resolution processes and apply them fairly.</p> <p>State (eg. SB 09-90, SB 13-193) and federal (eg. IDEA, ESSA Section 1116) legislative addresses families’ rights and responsibilities in their children’s education. Conduct learning sessions or informal coffee chats to ensure families are aware of and understand their rights and responsibilities.</p> <p>Make it easy for families to understand how the school and district operate. Consider hosting information nights for families transitioning into a new school. Have a plan in place to share school policies and procedures for students and families who transition in the middle of the school year.</p> <p>As a team, discuss the following question: Are families knowledgeable and able to raise questions or concerns about their child’s educational experience?</p> <p>Promising Partnership Practice: <a href="#">Newcomer Celebration</a></p>
<p>Address Inequitable Outcomes and Access</p>	<p>Work with the School Accountability Committee or an ad hoc group of interested parties to share understandable, disaggregated data on school progress and practices. Encourage community and leadership among historically under-represented groups</p>

	<p>Recognize and work to eliminate bias in family engagement practices and policies. Consider conducting an equity audit of practices and policies. Solicit feedback from staff, families, and community members and thoughtfully determine how to weave that feedback in school operations.</p> <p>As a team, discuss the following question: Does the school remove barriers for families to be advocates for and with students', particularly those who are most marginalized?</p> <p>Promising partnership Practice: <a href="#">PARITY Parent Leadership</a></p>
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### Core Component 5: Sharing Power

*The school partners with families in decisions that affect children and families and together - as a team - inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.*

Elements or Activities	Description
Strengthen the Family's Voice in Shared Decision Making	<p>Identify and remedy power imbalances. Work with a representative team of stakeholders to determine what it means for staff and families to be "equal partners" in students' education. Ensure that families on the School Accountability Committee represent the student population in the school. Provide training for family leadership to bring feedback to/from the broader school community.</p> <p>Transparently and accessibly communicate about decision-making processes. Many causes of contention (eg. implementing a new curriculum) can be avoided with clear and upfront communication.</p> <p>Build shared knowledge about and voice in decisions that affect children. Staff and families each play an essential role in positive student outcomes. Staff bring content expertise while families provide context expertise about their children outside of school.</p> <p>As a team, discuss the following question: Are families partners in making decisions that affect their children at school and in the community?</p> <p>Promising Partnership Practice: <a href="#">Title I Collective/Parent Leadership Team</a></p>
Build Families' Social and Political Connections	<p>Foster student and family leadership and civic engagement. Consider inviting local leaders to speak with students and families about opportunities for community engagement.</p> <p>Support the development of an effective family/parent organization that represents all families. Having a coalition of families as partners may ameliorate circumstances such as a potential school closure or controversial district policy.</p> <p>Consider having the PTA/PTO partner with the School Accountability Committee to align major improvement strategies with fundraising opportunities and goals.</p>

	<p>As a team, discuss the following question: Do families have a strong, broad-based organization that offers regular opportunities to develop relationships and raise concerns with school leaders, public officials, and business and community leaders?</p> <p>Promising Partnership Practice: <a href="#">Inclusivity on the DAC</a></p>
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**Core Component 6: Collaborating with the Community**

*The school collaborates with community organizations and members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.*

Elements or Activities	Description
Build a Strong Foundation for Community Partnerships	<p>As a school staff or School Accountability Committee, map community needs and assets. Share this community asset map with the broader community and incorporate any feedback they provide.</p> <p>Work with partners to clarify roles and responsibilities. Community partnerships may be simple (short term, uni-directional) or complex (ongoing, multi-directional). Align community partnerships with Major Improvement Strategies.</p> <p>As a team, discuss the following question: Does the school have a plan for when and how to engage community partners?</p> <p>Promising Partnership Practice: <a href="#">Fall Community Connections Event</a></p>
Connect the School with Community Partners	<p>Address student and family basic needs through community resources. Family engagement liaisons can lead these efforts.</p> <p>Use community partners to build staffs' cultural competence. Consider collaborating with local fine and performing arts centers, refugee and newcomer organizations, and faith-based organizations.</p> <p>The school may act as a hub of community life. Use the School Accountability Committee to explore how the school can create mutually beneficial community partnerships.</p> <p>As a team, discuss the following question: Do family and school leaders work closely with community organizations, businesses, and institutions of higher education?</p> <p>Promising Partnership Practice: <a href="#">The HUB @ Foothills Foodies</a></p>

## Guidance for Implementation

Implementation Element	Guidance or Considerations
<i>Staffing and Teams</i>	<p>Identifying a FSCP lead in the school building (e.g. family engagement liaison, extra duty contract teacher) will ensure sustainability and high-quality implementation. This lead should have a foundational knowledge of FSCP research, policies, and high-impact practice.</p> <p>Work with existing committees, such as the school accountability committee, special education advisory committee, parent-teacher association/organization, and student council, to gather input and share leadership.</p> <p>The principal should help elevate diverse voices in school decision-making and provide support for classroom teachers and other staff to build relationships with families. Joyce Epstein’s decades of research continually show that FSCP programs are most likely to be implemented and sustained when teams are co-chair between a parent/guardian and school staff. She encourages principals to support program implementation rather than to be the team lead. For example, a principal who supports FSCP work may provide classroom coverage for each teacher an hour a week to make positive phone calls home to families.</p>
<i>Training &amp; Resources</i>	<p>The <a href="#">Office of Family, School, and Community Partnerships</a> has several resources to help district and school staff implement effective and efficient partnership programs. Consider the following resources and supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">P-12 FSCP User’s Guide</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Promising Partnership Practices</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">LearnWorlds Online Courses</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">SAC/DAC Resources</a></li> </ul> <p>Technical Assistance and Professional Development Upon Request. Contact <a href="#">Darcy Hutchins</a> or <a href="#">Jes Stroope</a>.</p>
<i>Pacing</i>	<p>Installation - make sure these factors are in place before the year begins:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the school’s FSCP lead.</li> <li>• Ensure a fully-staffed school accountability committee.</li> <li>• Consider completing the FSCP rubrics with fidelity to determine starting points and priorities.</li> <li>• Schedule quarterly SAC/leadership team meetings to progress monitor.</li> <li>• Contact your district’s FSCP lead for any additional resources or professional development opportunities.</li> </ul>
<i>Progress Monitoring</i>	<p>Have your FSCP lead work with the school accountability committee to check-in at least quarterly about the family engagement components on the unified improvement plan. Consider incorporating <a href="#">non-assessment data</a> sources, in addition to assessment data, to guide your FSCP work.</p>



## Sample Implementation Plan

*Context: The following Sample Implementation Plan assumes that a school does not currently have a FSCP team and plan in place and is installing this strategy for the first time. Note also that the dates given in the table below are suggested approximate ranges for the given activities. A true action plan should specify precise dates and date-ranges for each activity. Note that the “FSCP Team” are the key personnel for most of these tasks. Other stakeholders should be included as needed. Representatives on the FSCP Team should represent the “significantly represented populations of students” in the school.*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Start/End Date</b>	<b>Key Personnel</b>
<i>Recruit FSCP Team Members</i>	The school’s FSCP team may be the School Accountability Committee, a subcommittee of the SAC, or a new group all together. Regardless of what you decide, this team should include school staff, families who represent the student population, community members, the building leader, and ideally students at the secondary level.	May-August	Principal leads recruitment with help from staff.  A family member is the lead of the team or co-chaired with school staff.
<i>Complete the FSCP Rubrics</i>	The FSCP User’s Guide includes a ste-by-step process for completing the rubrics. This may be done in one meeting or a series of meetings.	August	Team Chair/Co-Chairs
<i>Identify and Analyze Other Data Sources</i>	Other data sources (assessments, non-assessment, satisfaction surveys, etc.) should be considered as a complement to the rubrics. Analyzing multiple data sources will provide a bigger picture of starting points and illuminate priorities.	August	FSCP Team
<i>Set Priorities Based on Data</i>	At the beginning of the year, use the rubrics and data sources to set realistically optimistic priorities for the school-year. Come to consensus as a team to ensure the FSCP priorities meet the students’ most pressing needs.	August-September	FSCP Team with input from other teams, families, and staff.
<i>Incorporate FSCP on the Unified Improvement Plan</i>	Based on the data collection and analysis process above, include FSCP activities throughout the Unified Improvement Plan to help achieve the Major Improvement Strategies. These activities should incorporate recommendations from the district’s FSCP policy.	September-October	SAC, FSCP, Broader Community if SPF is Priority Improvement or Turnaround
<i>Meet Quarterly or Monthly</i>	The FSCP Team ideally meets once/month (but at least quarterly) throughout the school year to progress monitor, revise the plan, and determine how FSCP can be continually improved in the school.	Monthly August-May	FSCP Team with other stakeholders as needed

<i>Celebrate Achievements</i>	Celebrating accomplishments is an important part of sustaining and improving partnerships. At the school-level, consider showcasing each classroom's FSCP outreach. At the district-level, highlight promising partnership practices with a gallery walk or publication of practices.	April	FSCP Team leads  Invite the broader community
<i>Plan for Next School Year</i>	After the first year of implementation, data analysis and planning should occur in the spring of the prior year to be ready as soon as the school year begins.	May	FSCP Team

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