



Family and School Partnerships

A Publication of the Office of Special Education and Early Learning

Overview/Background: In order to support students with disabilities, schools must also collaborate with parents and families of students with disabilities. In addition to parents being critical members of Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) teams, research shows that parent and family involvement improves outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities. Through *Family-School Partnerships*, students demonstrate higher academic performance, increased motivation, improved social skills and behavior, earn higher grades, and have improved post-secondary outcomes. Additionally, students with involved and engaged families attend school more regularly and are less likely to drop out.

Critical Points:

- Under the [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#), districts must meet certain criteria pertaining to parent and family involvement. This includes conducting outreach to involve *all* parents and family members in a *meaningful* and *effective* way.
- The [Individuals with Disabilities Act \(IDEA\)](#) conveys specific guidelines for school systems to ensure that parents have the opportunity to participate.
- The [Kentucky Administrative Regulation for Special Education Programs \(KAR\)](#) recognize parents as vital members of the students Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) team. The KAR's establish certain parental rights that protect the student during ARC proceeding such as Procedural Safeguards (707 KAR 1:340), parent participation in ARC meetings (707 KAR 1:320), the use of interpreters (707 KAR 1:320), and IEP Contents (707 KAR 1:320).

Call to Action: Moving from *Parent Involvement* to *Family-School Partnership*

- ***Parent Involvement*** refers to the *amount* of participation a parent invests when it comes to their child's schooling. Parent involvement alone may result in "random acts or events" and small numbers of family participation.
- ***Family Engagement*** refers to a collaborative and strength-based process that builds positive, goal-oriented relationships. Family engagement may result in a qualitative focus connected to student strengths, needs and goals, systematic and intentional planning, a greater number of families impacted and leads to increased student success
- ***Family-School Partnership*** refers to a ***belief system*** that sees families as equal partners in their child's education and is embedded throughout school improvement initiatives and school culture. Family-school partnership has the most significant positive outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities.



Resources:

- [Human Development Institute \(HDI\)](#) - HDI's mission promotes the inclusion, independence, and contributions of people with disabilities and their families throughout the lifespan. The Institute provides research, training, and service projects, addressing a wide range of topics and issues in areas such as early childhood, education, alternate assessment, transition across the lifespan, community living, personal preparation, and parent involvement.
- [Kentucky Special Parent Involvement Network \(KY-SPIN\)](#) - The mission of KY-SPIN, Inc. is to link families and individuals with disabilities to valuable resources that will enable them to live productive, fulfilling lives. They offer a variety of supports, resources and workshops.
- [The Power of Parent Participation](#) - The Center for Parent Information & Resources offers information specific to parent and family engagement for students with disabilities.
- [Kentucky Autism Training Center \(KATC\)](#) - The Kentucky Autism Training Center offers systems of support for persons affected by autism by bridging research to practice. They provide training and resources to families and professionals, outreach opportunities, and supports for individuals with autism (and their families) that span education, early childhood, mental health, and employment.
- [ARC of KY](#) - The Arc of Kentucky advocates for the rights of citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities, offering services and supports that enhance the quality of life through interdependence, friendship, choice, and respect for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- [PACER Center: Working with Culturally Diverse Families](#) - The PACER Center provides information on how to meaningfully support families from diverse cultures or who speak another language.
- [Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership \(CIPL\)](#) – The purpose of CIPL is to provide a continuum of engagement and leadership development for families, schools and communities to increase academic success of Kentucky students and progress in Kentucky's schools.
- [National Center for Families Learning \(NCFL\)](#) – The National Center for Families Learning develops and provides programming, professional development, and resources that empower and raise families to achieve their potential.

Contact Information:

Shasta Hensley, Office of Special Education and Early Learning, Kentucky Department of Education
502-564-4970 ext. 4103, shasta.hensley@education.ky.gov

Susan Burgan, Parent Involvement Coordinator, University of Kentucky Human Development Institute
606-524-0173, susan.burgan@uky.edu

Bill Buchanan, Office of Special Education and Early Learning, Kentucky Department of Education
502-564-4970 ext. 4702, bill.buchanan@education.ky.gov