

# 2.1 Engagement is a School Improvement Strategy

## The School Improvement Strategy

Stakeholder engagement is, by itself, a best practice for achieving better outcomes for kids. Making decisions on education policy in an inclusive and transparent way leads to more informed decisions and encourages stakeholders to become partners in achieving the goals of the state and local community. Further, partnerships with community stakeholders — including parent groups, philanthropy, community-based organizations, tribes and tribal organizations, and others — build local capacity to implement innovative and ambitious strategies for meeting the needs of all students.

## Promoting Equity

When engaging with your communities, it is essential that you engage with community members that have traditionally or historically left out of the decision-making process and those who represent the greatest need in your community. Meaningful engagement of stakeholders means make explicit and resourced efforts to engage with students and families of color, communities representing differences in language, ability, religious background, LGBTQ+ identities, and students and families in low-income and low wealth communities.



### Keep in Mind

We must prioritize processes and decisions that consider our shared responsibility to serve our many students, and that means ensuring that the needs of all students — including English learners, migrant students, students of color, Native students, students from low-income families, students experiencing homelessness or foster care, and students with disabilities — are represented, heard, and incorporated into our decision-making.

### Highlighted Resources

#### How to Build an Engagement Strategy to Support School Improvement



[Nine Elements of Effective School Community Partnerships to Address Student Mental Health, Physical Health, and Overall Wellness](#) (IEL, NASP)

[Building Family and Community Demand for Dramatic Change in Schools — includes City-based examples](#) (Public Impact)

[Process and Protest: Promising Engagement Practices](#) (Partners for Each and Every Child)

[Seizing the Moment: A District Guide to Advance Equity Through ESSA](#) (Aspen Institute)

#### Engaging with Specific Groups

More information about strategies for including specific groups and partners in your stakeholder engagement strategy can be found in our first Handbook, [Meaningful Local Engagement Under ESSA: A Handbook for Lea and School Leaders](#).

## Family Engagement, Partnerships, and Community Schools

To best serve our public school students, we must rely on one another to learn more about and support each of their individual needs and strengths. Students, their families, in-school personnel, and community members will be strong and important allies in the local planning process. Only with their ideas, support, and investment, can an ambitious vision for improvement and achievement be met.

However, distributed and/or collaborative leadership requires significant investment of time and resources. It will be essential to develop a comprehensive strategy for how stakeholders will be engaged in the process of local planning and implementation and when. This strategy should consider:

- Development of **policy leadership teams** that include parents and families and meet regularly throughout the school year to evaluate and make decisions about specific school improvement strategies
- The use of students, teachers and family members as **ambassadors and information-leaders** to share and collect information for school and district leaders
- **Partnerships** with strong community organizations and leaders to support materials development, convening capacity, information dissemination, translation services, and other resources

Development and implementation of a community schools strategy that incorporates partnerships into the model of schooling and houses community organizations on-site—learn more about how to use this model from the Coalition for Community Schools at [communityschools.org](http://communityschools.org).



### Keep in Mind

Student outcomes are the goal. It is important to remember throughout your planning and engagement process that the ultimate goal of all school improvement strategy — and therefore stakeholder engagement efforts — is to improve outcomes for all students.

### Spotlight on Burburnett Independent School District, Texas Title I for Families

Burburnett Independent School District created a short, family-friendly video on what it means to be a Title I school, including how families and students can get involved. They used a free platform, PowToon, to create it.

Check it out at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-baTFnhJRU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-baTFnhJRU)

