



**Harvard Family  
Research Project**



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## **Resource Guide for Family Engagement in Education at the High School Level**

**Prepared for United Way Worldwide  
Family Engagement for High School Success  
Grantee Meeting**

**Prepared by Harvard Family Research Project**

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**For questions or comments about this paper,  
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## Introduction

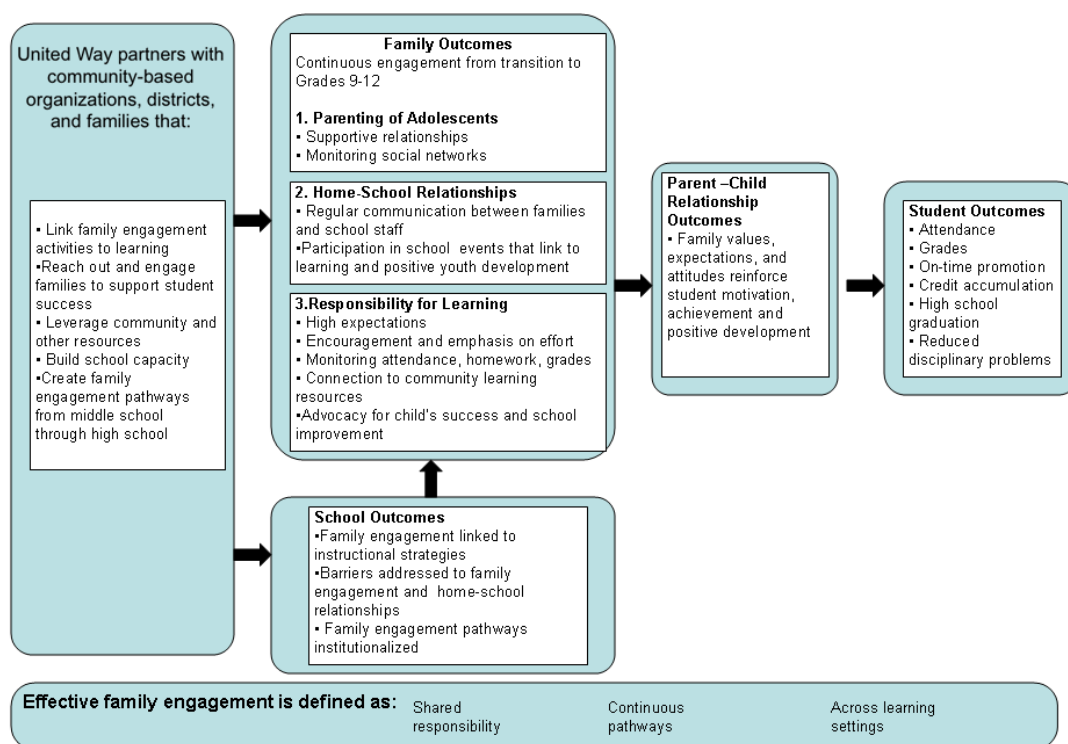
The United Way Worldwide’s family engagement initiative offers an opportunity for local United Ways to pilot strategies that empower families to support and monitor their children’s academic and developmental progress throughout the high school years. Although family engagement tends to decline as students enter adolescence it remains important at this stage of youth development, and is related to healthy behaviors and higher rates of college enrollment. This resource guide represents a sampling of research reports, best practices, and tools to guide you in conceptualizing and creating effective family engagement strategies for high school students.

The resources in this guide provide research-based examples of how communities and schools can reach out to families of high school students to engage them meaningfully in the journey to post-secondary success. A number of these resources focus on the critical transition periods between eighth and ninth grades and high school and college, and discuss specific strategies to help families and schools support students through these pivotal periods. Other resources focus on how schools can use data to help students and their families navigate the requirements of high school so they graduate fully prepared for success in college and beyond.

The resources are grouped into categories that align with the five key elements of the research-based framework for effective family engagement: family engagement linked to student learning; outreach and engagement of families; leveraging community resources; building school capacity to address barriers to family engagement and promote home-school relations; and family engagement pathways. Within each category, you will find a selected list of resources that addresses that particular element of the framework.

### A Research-Based Theory of Change for Family Engagement

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## Family Engagement Linked to Student Learning

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This section of the guide provides information on linking family engagement to learning. Resources focus on how parental roles change as children move into adolescence to reflect developmentally-appropriate strategies for supporting student learning, and address the ways that schools and communities can help families and students navigate the requirements of high school and prepare themselves for successful college attendance.

### **Families, School and the Adolescent: Connecting Research, Policy, and Practice (2009)**

edited by N.E. Hill and R.K Chao

(New York: Teachers College Press)

This book presents cutting-edge research that can help families and schools understand how to support student achievement during the transition to middle and high school, including effective strategies to help parents remain involved in their adolescents' education. (A summary of this work can be accessed online at: <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/blog/uk/2009/10/the-parental-involvement-puzzle.html>)

### **Family Involvement in Middle School and High School Students' Education (2007)**

by H. Kreider, M. Caspe, S. Kennedy, and H. Weiss

(Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project)

This brief synthesizes research that demonstrates how family involvement contributes to adolescents' learning and development during the middle and high school years.

[http://www.hfrp.org/FI\\_MiddleAndHighSchool](http://www.hfrp.org/FI_MiddleAndHighSchool)

### **9<sup>th</sup> Grade Guide to College Preparation** by New Visions for Public Schools

This resource, designed for families of students in New York, explains the necessary steps to high school graduation and college attendance, including information about Regents exams, coursework, attendance, and grades.

<http://michaelmassiah.x7hosting.com/collegebound/NV9thguide-ENGLISH-web.pdf>

### **Success at Every Step: How 23 Programs Support Youth on the Path to College and Beyond (2009)** by S. Hooker and B. Brand

(Washington, D.C.: American Youth Policy Forum)

This compendium examines 23 successful programs that help youth complete high school ready to achieve success in college and their future careers, and includes a logic model illustrating the necessary steps in preparing youth for college.

<http://www.aypf.org/publications/SuccessAtEveryStep.htm>

## Outreach and Engagement of Families

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This set of resources, focusing on strategies to reach out to parents and engage them in their children's education, provides tools to help families transition their children into ninth grade, develop protective strategies to prevent school dropout behavior, and prepare their children for college and the workforce.

**Redesigning the Ninth-Grade Experience: Reduce Failure, Improve Achievement, and Increase High School Graduation Rates (2008)** by G. Bottoms

(Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board)

This resource illustrates the importance of involving families in conversations with teachers and advisors about their children's coursework and postsecondary plans as an important element of programs that help students transition to ninth grade.

[http://www.sreb.org/publications/2008/08V06\\_9th-grade\\_redesign.pdf](http://www.sreb.org/publications/2008/08V06_9th-grade_redesign.pdf)

**Tapping into Technology: The Role of the Internet in Family-School Communications (2008)**

by Suzanne Bouffard

(Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project)

This research digest summarizes the ways that Internet-based communication methods, such as email, Websites, and other social networking technologies, impact home-school communication.

<http://www.hfrp.org/TappingIntoTechnology>

**Parent Engagement Toolkit**

This tool, sponsored by the America's Promise Alliance, is designed to help families understand ways to prevent their children from dropping out of high school; the toolkit focuses on the "3 A's" of attendance, achievement, and attainment.

<http://www.americaspromise.org/Resources/ParentEngagement.aspx>

**Learn, Do, Earn Toolkit**

This tool, created by a partnership of New Jersey educators and business leaders, communicates information to help parents get their children ready for college, work and life. It includes links to presentations about specific college readiness topics and tips.

<http://www.learn.do.earn.org/for-parents.asp>

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## Leveraging Community Resources

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This section of the guide focuses on the importance of creating inclusive community partnerships to help ensure student academic success. Resources include information on after school programs with strong family engagement components and community-based workshops designed to help families prepare their children for college.

**Help Your Children Succeed in High School and Go to College (2008)** by Mariela Dabbah

This audio-visual tool and accompanying facilitator's guide, sponsored by Ronald McDonald House Charities and Hispanic American Commitment to Educational Resources, help trainers conduct productive workshops for Latino families about supporting their children during high school and the transition to college.

[http://www.meencanta.com/hacer/guide\\_for\\_parents\\_and\\_educators.html](http://www.meencanta.com/hacer/guide_for_parents_and_educators.html)

**Focus on Families! How to Build and Support Family Centered Practices in Afterschool (2006)** by Z. Kakli, H. Kreider, P. Little, T. Buck, and M. Coffrey  
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project)

This comprehensive guide to engaging families in after school programs helps stakeholders understand how to create and expand existing family involvement efforts.  
<http://www.hfrp.org/FocusOnFamilies>

**Out-of-School Time Program Research & Evaluation Database & Bibliography (ongoing)**  
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project)

The “Family/Community Involvement” section of this database contains up-to-date research studies and evaluations of family engagement in out-of-school time programs.  
<http://www.hfrp.org/OSTDatabase>

**Community Cafés: Changing the Lives of Children through Conversations that Matter**

This interactive guide, sponsored by the National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds, offers steps to create guided conversations to build parent voice and facilitate action to improve the lives of children. It includes information, resources for further reading, and tools for planning, hosting and evaluating your work.  
<http://www.ctfalliance.org>

## **Building School Capacity**

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The resources in this section focus on developing systemic family engagement strategies within schools and districts. The featured reports guide stakeholders through the strategic planning process of building school capacity to carry out effective family engagement policies and programs and provide examples of districts that have successfully implemented strong family engagement strategies.

**Seeing is Believing: Promising Practices for How School Districts Promote Family Engagement (2009)** by H. Westmoreland, H. Rosenberg, M.E. Lopez, and H. Weiss  
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project)

This issue brief provides a framework for systemic family engagement and examines how six school districts use innovative strategies to create and sustain family engagement “systems at work.”  
<http://www.hfrp.org/SeeingIsBelieving>

**How to Develop a Logic Model for Districtwide Family Engagement Strategies (2009)**

by H. Westmoreland, M.E. Lopez, and H. Rosenberg  
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project)

This step-by-step guide helps stakeholders understand and develop a logic model for districtwide family engagement efforts, including identifying resources, activities, and outcomes to help guide programs toward their goals.  
<http://www.hfrp.org/DistrictLogicModel>

**BEATING THE ODDS: How Thirteen NYC Schools Bring Low-Performing Ninth Graders to Timely Graduation and College Enrollment, and College Pathways Rubric (2007)**

by C. Ascher and C. Maguire

(Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University)

This study identifies four key strategies used by schools to prepare low-performing ninth-graders for timely high school graduation and college enrollment: academic rigor, networks of timely supports, college expectations/access, and effective use of data. An accompanying rubric, based on this research, allows high schools to evaluate their work around these four dimensions.

[http://www.annenberginstitute.org/pdf/BTO\\_report.pdf](http://www.annenberginstitute.org/pdf/BTO_report.pdf)

<http://www.annenberginstitute.org/pdf/CollegePathwaysRubric.pdf>

**Parent Involvement Strategies in Urban Middle and High Schools in the Northeast and Island Regions (2009)**

by G. Agronick, A. Clark, L. O'Donnell, and A. Stueve

(Regional Education Laboratory at Education Development Center, Inc.)

This assessment of school practices that collect information about parent involvement policies and practices includes a comprehensive appendix of major family engagement models, including available evaluation studies.

[http://www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL\\_2009069.pdf](http://www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2009069.pdf)

## Family Engagement Pathways

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This section provides resources that focus on helping schools and families create seamless pathways to educational success by developing effective processes to help students transition into ninth grade and, later, to college.

**The Citi College Planning Guide (annual)** by New Visions for Public Schools

This resource, published every August as a supplement in the New York Post, provides information for New York students and parents to help them prepare for college, including timelines of major events and benchmarks in the college application process.

<http://www.newvisions.org/collegguide2007.asp>

**Transition from Middle School to High School (2006)** by J.S. Smith

(Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association)

This brief reviews existing research on the transition to high school and outlines the need for comprehensive transition programs to address the changes students experience between eighth and ninth grades.

[http://www.nmsa.org/portals/0/pdf/research/Research\\_Summaries/Transition\\_from\\_MStoHS.pdf](http://www.nmsa.org/portals/0/pdf/research/Research_Summaries/Transition_from_MStoHS.pdf)