

Family Engagement Compliance and Practices at Saint Paul Public Schools

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List of Acronyms

AIPM:	Achievement and Integration Program for Minnesota
ATP:	Action Team for Partnerships
DPAC:	District Parent Advisory Committee
EL:	English Learner
ESEA:	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESSA:	Every Student Succeeds Act
FEP:	Family Engagement Plan
IDEA:	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
MCA:	Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment
MDE:	Minnesota Department of Education
NCLB:	No Child Left Behind
NNPS:	National Network of Partnership Schools
OFECP:	Office of Family Engagement and Community Partnerships
PAC:	Parent Advisory Council
PFIP:	Parent and Family Involvement Policy
SCIP:	School Continuous Improvement Plan
SPPS:	Saint Paul Public Schools
TERI:	Teacher Education Redesign Initiative
WBW:	World's Best Workforce

Federal and State Statutes Cited

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title I, 20 U.S.C. §§ 6311-6576
ESEA, Title II, 20 U.S.C. §§ 6601-6692
ESEA, Title III, 20 U.S.C. §§ 6801-7014
ESEA, Title IV, 20 U.S.C. §§ 7101-7294
ESEA, Title VI, 20 U.S.C. §§ 7401-7546
World's Best Workforce, Minn. Stat. § 120B.11
Achievement and Integration Program, Minn. Stat. § 124D.861
Parent and Family Involvement Policy, Minn. Stat. § 124D.8955
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1400-1482

Abstract

The study outlined in this report examined the Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) district to review implementation of federal and state laws related to family engagement and identify gaps between mandates and practice. Guidance provided by SPPS to its schools and the schools' family engagement plans (FEPs) were reviewed critically. Qualitative research further explored how FEPs are developed and used by schools and parents. The study examined only part of the logic model connecting intentions of policymakers all the way to parents' ability to support their child's learning. However, the research is unique in its effort to examine not only policy and law, but the layers of roles assigned to overseeing implementation. Rather than study how one box performed or how two boxes fit together, this study examined illustrations of several stakeholders' responses to mandated practices of family engagement. Results of multiple layers of research and analysis were summarized, which led to various considerations for SPPS. Some tools were proposed. Strategic planning was found to be lacking from mandated family engagement planning, and support for those fulfilling compliance, often the liaisons, was emphasized. The report also discusses ways SPPS is already succeeding in its family engagement efforts to address student outcomes.

Executive Summary

In the fall of 2017, graduate students at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs worked closely with the Office of Family Engagement and Community Partnerships (OFCEP) at SPPS to examine the requirements of and SPPS compliance with federal and state mandates for family engagement. The analysis found that SPPS is largely compliant with mandates, and various stakeholders recognize the district's and schools' efforts. Analyzing gaps in compliance and practice, findings focus on four areas:

1. A legal analysis revealed gaps within the school FEPs, WBW Plan and District Title I Plan in areas such as: (1) lack of coordination of federal and state programming; (2) failure to describe and include parents in the development of curriculum; (3) identifying and developing programming with community partnerships; (4) incorporating meaningful two-way communication between schools and families; and (5) providing evidence of family engagement in the development of the FEP, WBW Plan and the District Title I Plan.
2. FEPs largely direct schools to comply with mandates, but areas of improvement were identified. Prompts in the FEP guidance provided by SPPS to its schools were highlighted where schools demonstrated misunderstanding of compliance and best practices.
3. Interviews and surveys evaluated the staffing and processes at schools to attract authentic participation of targeted populations in FEP development. Considerations for improvement include definitions for the liaison role, a call for strategic planning and leadership, and attracting diverse parent contributors.
4. Finally, interviews and surveys examined how parent stakeholders experience a small sample of family engagement efforts by schools and the district. Parents place less value on compliance exercises than meaningful engagement experiences.

Research Methods

Information presented in this paper was collected through a review of secondary research, including relevant policy and literature (scholarly articles and organization white papers), and primary research, including interviews and surveys with education professionals and parents. Both approaches informed this report's overarching question: *What opportunities does the Saint Paul Public Schools district have to improve fulfillment of federal and state mandates for family engagement¹ and its related communication with internal stakeholders?* A description of five primary data sources used in the analysis for this report follows.

First, semi-formal interviews and meetings provided an overview of the scope and context relating to family engagement in practice at SPPS and its schools. In order to better understand the district's current practice and context, SPPS documents were reviewed, some of which were directly provided by SPPS and others found online. Weekly calls with a director at SPPS were held to fill gaps in understanding, as well as provide direction for our research. Finally, informational meetings at the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and SPPS' Title I office, and conversations with parents in the district were used to put compliance and practice issues in context.

Second, two tools were developed to score school FEPs, which served to evaluate district and school documentation for meeting mandates and developing effective practices. The first tool was a year-to-year comparison of the FEPs of 13 schools that examined what changed from their 2016-2017 FEPs to 2017-2018 FEPs. Within a spreadsheet scores were assigned, 1 for an update or 0 for no update, based on significant changes for each section within the FEP. The second FEP evaluation tool was a scoring rubric that accounts for nearly every activity prompt in SPPS documentation. The

¹ For purposes of this report we have chosen to use the term "family engagement" throughout. We acknowledge that the terms "family engagement", "parent(al) involvement", and "parent engagement" are all used interchangeably throughout federal and state law, SPPS policy, and academic literature. Family engagement was chosen for consistency, and because it is the most current term used. Family engagement relates to the engagement of parents and other caregivers to children who are committed to the participation and involvement in a child's academic achievement.

tool followed the logic of the district's FEP guidance, i.e. the FEP Rubric and FEP Template, and linked activity prompts. Thorough FEP guidance for schools allows one to copy and paste hints directly into the FEP and avoid missing details needed for federal and state mandates. Scores of 2 were assigned for a full response, 1 for a partial response, or 0 for a non-response to each of the three columns of the FEP Rubric, i.e. "Meeting Compliance of the Law or Policy," "Implementing with Quality," and "Mastering for Outcomes." This scoring process covered 23 activity prompts in the FEP for 28 schools, providing a robust review of 2017-2018 FEPs² in the district. The FEP Scoring Review Table is found at Appendix I.

Third, surveys were conducted of 21 liaisons during their monthly meeting with OFECP. The results of the survey were coded and analyzed to identify trends occurring in the drafting of FEPs within SPPS schools. A summary of the analysis is provided in Appendix D.

Fourth, a focus group with eight members representing the District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) was held to provide an introduction to parents' awareness and impressions of school family engagement practices. A transcription of the focus group and interview guide are provided in Appendices G and F, respectively. Members of the focus group provided their contact information for a follow-up conversation, and two parents were successfully contacted for additional information.

Fifth, five schools were chosen for in-depth interviews based on a scale of measured significance of change in FEPs from the 2016-2017 school year to the 2017-2018 school year. Two elementary and two high schools were identified on opposite ends, i.e. "consistent" schools and "big change" schools. Too few FEPs from middle schools were available for comparison, and SPPS recommended a school to provide a middle school comparison. In cases where significant change

² Not all FEPs were available for review and analysis.

was made to the FEP, it was assumed that there had been a process worthy of study. Groups with little to no change served as controls.

Key informant interviews started with liaisons for each identified school, both in-person and by telephone. An interview guide consisting of 12 questions is provided in Appendix F. Interview subjects were initially invited by email to participate in the research. Responses were captured via telephone recordings and note-taking. Each interview was either transcribed or summarized. The liaison interview informed the development of appropriate follow-up questions to principals and parents about their roles involved in developing the FEP and perspectives relating to use of the FEP. In most cases, an email interview with principals or assistant principals followed. Finally, interviews with parents who were involved in the drafting of FEPs for each identified school were conducted, mostly by phone. Sample interview guides are provided in Appendix F. Data from interviews were coded and analyzed to better understand various roles of contributors, the processes undertaken by schools in developing its FEP, and other factors that lead to improved compliance for family engagement strategies.

Background

SPPS is one of Minnesota's largest school districts. Within the district there are 58 schools, approximately 37,600 students who attend, and 120 languages and dialects spoken. Asian Americans make up 33% of students, African Americans 30%, Caucasian Americans 21%, Latino Americans 14% and American Indians 2%. In 2016, the four-year comprehensive graduation rate was 76.5% (SPPS, 2015). At SPPS schools, 40% of elementary students and 75% of secondary students must qualify for free or reduced-price lunch to be eligible for Title I funding. Currently, of its 37,605 students, 72% are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and 52 out of 58 SPPS schools are eligible for Title I funding (SPPS, 2015).

With Title I allocation, schools fund school-wide programs intended to upgrade their educational programs to improve academic achievement of all students. SPPS embraces the opportunity presented by the changing face of its families and navigating complex family engagement clauses referenced throughout federal and state law. When done well, family engagement can promote a range of benefits for students, including improved school readiness, higher student achievement, better social skills and behavior, and increased likelihood of school graduation (Westmoreland, Rosenberg, Lopez, & Weiss, 2009). However, SPPS shares the struggle of the nation, which has grown more conscientious of addressing gaps in academic opportunities and outcomes, but has fallen short on remedies and solutions.

Despite its many critics, standardized testing broadly serves to assess the gaps in academic progress of student achievement in math, reading and science. According to the 2016 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) for SPPS, 37% of all students are proficient in math, 39% in reading, and 32% in science (SPPS, 2016). However, 72% of white students are proficient readers for their grade level, while only 25% of black students are proficient. Math and science proficiency

levels share similar gaps, 66% and 22%; 66% and 17% respectively, for white and black students. American Indian, Hispanic and Asian students fare only slightly better than black students (SPPS, 2016). Some outcomes in SPPS have improved in recent years, including graduation rates for minority groups, but the priority to address the “achievement gap” or “opportunity gap” has been the focus of federal legislation in education since Lyndon B. Johnson’s “War on Poverty” was codified in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965.

ESEA was enacted primarily as a school-based law designed to provide financial assistance to low-income school districts and to advance integration (Moles & Fage, 2011). Accordingly, family engagement initially referred to policy involvement by the federal government to ensure that schools were focusing Title I funds on the needs of disadvantaged students by targeting schools with families in greatest financial need. Since its enactment, ESEA has expanded through several reauthorizations to include family engagement provisions that emphasize how parents could become more involved in their children’s education. For example, the 1988 Hawkins-Stafford Amendment encouraged districts³ to develop policies that ensure family engagement in the planning, design, and implementation of Title I programs, provide timely information to parents about Title I programs, and provide parents information in a language and format they could understand. This requirement is particularly complex for SPPS, where over 100 languages and dialects are spoken by its students, and 34% are English Learners (ELs) (SPPS, 2015). To truly engage parents, SPPS takes on added costs and challenges for providing translations and interpreters for family communication and engagement.

³ The term used in federal policy is “LEA”, which means “a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform as service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or of or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools”. 20 U.S.C. § 7801, Sec. 8101(30). For purposes of this report LEAs will be referred to as “districts.”

After enactment of the 1994 Improving America's Schools Act and continuing with the enactment of 2001's No Child Left Behind (NCLB), school districts receiving over \$500,000 in Title I funds annually must reserve at least 1% of its funds for activities to involve families in the education of their children. Facing that expectation, SPPS employs over 20 full-time district-level staff at the OFECP to oversee and administer several programs related to engaging parents (OFECP, 2015). Among OFECP's many functions, staff oversee the development of both district and school-level policy on family engagement.

Each district receiving Title I grants is required to have a written policy⁴ on family engagement that is prepared jointly with parents of children participating in the program. The policy must describe how the district will involve parents in the development of the overall district plan for Title I, school identification, and school improvement procedures (District Title I Plan). Further, within its District Title I Plan, districts must outline in writing how they will assist Title I schools in planning and implementing effective family engagement, build the schools' and parents' capacity for family engagement, and coordinate family engagement activities under Title I with those of other relevant federal, state and local programs.⁵

Each school receiving Title I grants is required to have a written family engagement policy to be developed with input from parents. To meet this requirement, SPPS developed the FEP Template that provides schools and the district with documentation state and federal auditors regularly seek during Title I compliance checks. The FEP is organized into four impact areas: welcoming environment, family partnerships, teaching and learning, and community partnerships. Each school should outline how they provide families with timely information about Title I programs, share school performance profiles, describe curriculum and assessments used by the school, and offer

⁴ The language of the law refers to a policy, but in practice it is in the form of a plan that is revised annually.

⁵ 20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(a).

opportunities for regular meetings to share opinions and suggestions.⁶ OFECP provides Title I schools with an FEP Rubric and suggestions for how the FEP should be filled in. As part of the FEP, school-parent compacts (Compacts) describe the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction, ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their child's learning, and the importance of regular communication between teachers and parents.⁷

Another requirement for Title I schools is the School Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP), which outlines how schools will reach students with lower academic performance, as measured on an annual basis. The SCIP requires a needs assessment and school improvement planning process. SPPS must identify and coordinate improvement procedures on a school level, and schools must again be inclusive of parent input in development of its SCIP.⁸

Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) are one way for districts to include parental input, as PACs represent ethnic, racial and gender identity groups and provide a safe, comfortable space for parents to communicate through a shared language and cultural lens on behalf of themselves to the district and schools. Originally required in 1974 under ESEA, PACs now are deregulated, but still serve states and districts. While PACs meet certain federal and state policy requirements to hear from parents, the spirit of the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is clear: schools should engage parents at the individual level, and *all* parents should contribute to improving their children's academic outcomes.

In the federal government's most recent enactment of education law, ESSA reauthorized ESEA and builds on key areas of progress, such as historic-low dropout rates, and joins a call from educators and families to create a better law that focuses on the clear goal of fully preparing all

⁶ 20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(b).

⁷ 20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(d).

⁸ This report did not include any analysis of SCIPS.

students for success in college and future careers. It prioritizes excellence and equity and recognizes the importance of supporting great educators in our nation's schools (ESSA, 2017).

With this holistic vision in mind, the significant challenges to meaningful engagement with diverse parent groups remains and can be even more difficult when federal and state requirements risk existing as compliance checklist items, rather than serving as living documents to unite and guide the school to improve policies and practices. Further, after schools submit their policies and plans, there are few reporting mechanisms to hold schools accountable to both delivery and progress. This places the impetus on school leadership to both create and enact policies in a way that is more meaningful than a box to check as part of a mandate.

Defining and Supporting Family Engagement

Family engagement and parental involvement appear interchangeably throughout federal and state legislation and SPPS policy, with only parental involvement being expressly defined. The term family engagement acknowledges the wide array of caregiving and responsibility for a child's upbringing, as well as calling for a deeper level of commitment and participation than involvement connotes. The statutory definition of parental involvement is:

“The participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring: (A) that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning; (B) that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school; (C) that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making on advisory

committees to assist in the education of their child; and (D) the carrying out of other activities, such as those described in [Title I of ESEA].”⁹

In its most recent iteration, family engagement is referenced throughout ESSA in myriad ways to include assisting a child’s learning at home, communication between families and schools, attending parent meetings and educational workshops, and contributing to the writing of school policies.

To bolster family engagement, many SPPS schools are served by a liaison, who is designated to help bridge gaps between the school and families. Districts are encouraged, but not mandated by ESEA, to provide liaison staff and resources for home learning. Liaisons are often the primary authors of FEPs in SPPS, which made them a key informant of this study.

⁹ 20 U.S.C. § 7801, Sec. 8101(39).

Literature Review

Families are their children's first teachers and can play a significant ongoing role in the academic growth of their children throughout their school years. There is considerable research examining the link between family engagement in education and positive outcomes in student performance (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Sheldon, Epstein, & Galindo, 2010; Radzi, Razak, & Sukor, 2010; Van Voorhis, 2011). "When parents are involved, students perform better academically, students have a higher confidence in their abilities, and there is a better relationship between the student and the teacher (Sakamoto, 2017)." Historically there has been a research and practice link "between low-income families engaging with their schools, which leads to higher student achievement, greater social and political capital for families, and empowerment to demand high achieving education (Moles, Jr., 2011, p. 5)."

Defining Parental/Family Engagement

Dr. Joyce L. Epstein, the director of the National Network of Partnership School (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University, is one of the leading contributors to the field of family engagement. Her recommendations, along with the National PTA's standards, have been utilized broadly in schools across the country to assist in implementation of federal mandates relating to school level FEPs. Of particular influence on shaping many district policies and programs is Epstein's (2000) framework for family engagement, which follows:

1. Parenting—Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.
2. Communicating—Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.
3. Volunteering—Recruit and organize parent help and support.

4. Learning at home—Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.
5. Decision making—Include parents in school decisions and developing parent leaders and representatives.
6. Collaborating with the community—Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development. (Epstein, p. 41).

In her research, Epstein (2002) makes it clear that successful school-parent partnerships are not stand-alone or add-on programs; they must be well unified and aligned with an individual school's goals. There is a deeper complexity of practices and challenges in meeting all families "where they are at," while accounting for school climate, teaching practices, and the families a school is serving (Epstein, 2002). Choices and redefinition of what family engagement actually means at the individual school can and should be tailored, but the commonalities of Epstein's best practices create a strong basis for a school's success in implementing family engagement (Epstein, 2002).

In the large body of research relating to the impact of family engagement on a student's success, Henderson and Mapp (2002) found, "When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more." In their study, the authors found that students with involved parents, no matter their income and background, were more likely to:

- (1) earn higher grades and test scores;
- (2) enroll in higher-level programs;
- (3) be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits;
- (4) attend school regularly;
- (5) have better social skills,

show improved behavior, and adapt well to school; and (6) graduate high school and continue with postsecondary education. (Henderson and Mapp, 2002, p. 25)

Parent-School Partnerships

Numerous research studies (Carlisle, Stanley, & Kemple, 2006; Kaya & Lundeen, 2010) suggest that parents may not know they should be involved in their child's education or that such involvement can improve student outcomes, and schools should not assume that parents know the importance they play in supporting their children's learning. Parents' own experiences in school may impact their willingness or interest in being involved, and this effect may be more pronounced in the African American population where there is a "long history of unsuccessful experiences with schools that have influenced their involvement (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008, p. 151)." Schools may need to help parents understand the importance and actually make formal invitations for parents to be positively involved in the school before barriers such as lack of knowledge, fear of incompetence or negative personal experiences can be overcome (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler, 2007).

When teachers and leaders within schools form partnerships with families and offer them expertise in subject matter and information, parents feel more sure of their abilities and subsequently increase their involvement (Kaya & Lundeen, 2010; Van Voorhis, 2003). For example, studies on science education and parental reticence to become involved was found to be based on a perceived lack of efficacy and their own negative experience in the subject matter (Kaya & Lundeen, 2010). Parents would like to do more to help their children learn at home and grew more confident in their abilities after a "family science night" with community partners and the school (Kaya & Lundeen, 2010). Empowering parents to help their children learn at home is the type of involvement teachers prefer (Kaya & Lundeen, 2010; Radzi, Razak, & Sukor, 2010).

Frances Van Voorhis' (2011) research on homework practices using Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) builds on past work relating to the benefits of homework on student achievement. The premise of the "theory of overlapping spheres of influence" (p. 222) is that the influence of home, community and school all come into play in improving student outcomes when meaningful and well designed homework is selected.

Sakamoto's (2017) research at one rural school district experiencing a drop in family engagement suggested that parents wanted more timely communication (personal and electronic methods preferred) and workshops on how to help their children with academics at home. Sakamoto also found that parents would be willing to volunteer if asked. However, teachers felt this was too heavy a burden. Sakamoto proposed district staff, community resources and partners, and online training could be utilized to address parental needs without overburdening the teachers. Sakamoto also found that most parents were unaware of their school's parent input committee, known as the School Community Council (SCC). A basic awareness of SCC piqued parent interest in what was happening at SCC meetings, how decisions were made, and how they could provide input. Parents shared they might need training in order to have the confidence necessary to be involved with the decision-making process at their school (Sakamoto, 2017).

The importance of the school-parent partnership reaches beyond that of parent and teacher, but includes partnerships between the community and the schools (Sheldon, Epstein, & Galindo, 2010). Their study of the effects of family engagement on student math proficiency focused on the collaborative climate and shared goals necessary improve student math outcomes. In part, their "analysis suggests that school-level math achievement from one year to the next is related to the partnership climate at the school (p. 9)."

Disconnect in Assumptions Between Parents and School Staff

Two-way communication between schools and families is understood to be important by both staff and parents, although some research suggests that one-way, written communication is the primary means of communication in practice (Ferrara, 2009). One-way written communication has not been shown to be as effective and meaningful as the two-way communication methods as suggested by Epstein and others. School district administration struggle with parent inclusion as partners in academic programs, and all staff seem more open to having parents serve as classroom helpers as opposed to the more academically focused help with learning that can move the needle on student success (Ferrara, 2009, p.133). Ferrara (2009) also concludes that staff did not feel it was their responsibility to help parents to be more prepared to assist their child(ren)'s learning and were not highly supportive of the concepts of family engagement. These conclusions run contrary to other researchers such as Epstein that support the notion that a comprehensive (6 step) approach to family engagement will increase outcomes for students.

A study of Hispanic families (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006) found a disconnect between staff assumptions about parental interest and effort in involvement and the actual interest and involvement desired by the parents when surveyed. Staff assumed that families were disinterested and disengaged in their children's studies, whereas parents expressed a desire to help, but not always with the accompanying knowledge of how to do so. Additionally, parents wanted to know what their children were learning and how to help them, and they also wanted better communication with the school.

Additional research reveals enlightening information about what staff in fact know about their school's own parent involvement objectives. In one study (Ferrara, 2009) teachers were found to have had little knowledge about the FEPs in their districts or school. Teachers reported being neither asked about the plans nor involved in the development of the plan. Administrators knew

about district wide plans, but failed to share them with staff (Ferrara, 2009).

Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2008) affirm that school administrators and school leadership play a seminal role in building a strong family engagement culture in the schools. Research by Epstein (2002) emphasizes the importance of the atmosphere and a positive school climate that school administrators help create. Bartles and Eskow's (2010) work on teacher training in parental involvement noted "school administrative support to be important for both their motivation to complete the coursework and their ability to foster change in practice (p. 68)."

Barriers to Quality Family Engagement

A lack of involving teachers and parents in the development of family engagement programs (FEPs, Compacts, and other programs or policies) appears as a consistent theme in multiple studies (Ferrara, 2009, p.139; Sakamoto, 2017). While federal and state law *do* mandate that parents play a role, it is often just a select few who actually participate in such planning. Such lack of diverse involvement may cause a lack of ownership by those not involved; especially if there is not an understanding that there were parent representatives on the development committees and that access to such committees was not broadly publicized. Research by Sakamoto (2017) provides evidence that more parents want to be involved in policy and governance opportunities, but do not know how to do so. Teachers, too, who are not informed or involved in these policies may not have the buy-in to make the efforts needed to form the kinds of partnerships with parents that can improve outcomes for their schools and students (Ferrara, 2009).

Multiple studies report that administrators and teachers have apprehension about family engagement and the partnerships that might result in better student performance due to engaged parents and families (Ferrara, 2009). There are also studies (Epstein, 2013; Ferrara, 2009) that suggest a lack of teacher training and preparation in this area might be a factor. Kaya and Lundeen

(2010) suggest that their research findings should be shared with teachers so that the importance of partnerships in assisting their efforts to inform and involve parents and educate their children can be realized. Additional factors such as the time and energy investment that these endeavors might take after a full day with students, and/or a fear of being judged by parents, have been found to be concerns and barriers raised directly by teachers (Carlisle, Stanley, & Kemple, 2005; Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2006). Some teachers have reported that it is not their responsibility to “teach parents how to parent correctly” (Ferrara, 2009, p. 138).

When pre-service teachers are given the opportunity to have coursework on family engagement or family-centered teaching techniques, their attitudes about family engagement changed leading to a bigger investment in implementing successful family engagement efforts (Bigham & Abernathy, 2007; Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2006). Research by Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark (2007) on “becoming multicultural” discussed the importance of pre-service teachers experiencing different cultures first hand either through immersion or even home visits as a way to assist in teachers understanding and support for family inclusion/involvement in education. They posit that with supported opportunities to process their experiences and time to develop a “plan of action”, these experiences could challenge their stereotypes, broaden their cultural understandings and help them work better with families having different backgrounds and from different cultures than their own. These results suggest that if colleges and universities added such curriculum to the teacher preparatory training, teachers might come to the classroom better willing and able to engage parents. This also implies that staff development opportunities for teachers already in the workforce could be implemented to see broader acceptance and embrace of family engagement in the schools. “Even before these candidates enter the classroom, they report perceptions about which parents are most likely to be involved in their child’s education” (Ferrara, 2009, p. 137), which will have long term

impacts on diverse classrooms filled with children eager to learn and their parents wanting to be involved and assure the best outcomes for their children.

The challenge is in finding avenues to provide information about the research and benefits of family engagement in order to change attitudes in all three sectors: administration, teachers and parents. Efforts must assure that all six of Epstein's types of parental involvement are utilized and supported in every school with a sustainable plan developed and embraced by all of these parties in order to improve outcomes for the children they all serve.

What Literature Says About What Works

Shared leadership. Having the support of top school leaders (principals) is key to a successful school family engagement effort (Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein, 2008). Another important component of creating a strong partnership is creating site Leadership Teams or Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) as they are described in research, which help ensure a sustained effort and a strong team approach surrounding family engagement (Epstein, 2010). Ongoing and regular professional development on the subject of family engagement is important in teacher pre-service training as well as with a strong, focused staff development program to address staff already employed who may not have benefited from this more recent addition to teacher training (Casper, Lopez, Chu & Weiss, 2010; Epstein, Galindo & Sheldon, 2011; Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2006). Other research based suggestions for developing a comprehensive school approach are mentoring, coaching and utilizing support from professional groups who can provide technical support (Casper, Lopez, Chu & Weiss, 2010).

Some research would suggest schools consider utilizing school counselors as well as teachers and staff in family engagement work. Assigning a percent of counselors' and principals' time to family engagement correlated with the quality of a school's family engagement or partnership

program (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2010). Research by Griffin & Steen (2010) found over half of counselor study respondents indicated they were not involved in family engagement activities at all.

Research by Epstein & Van Voorhis (2010) in their work on involving school counselors in the family engagement and partnership process reiterate the need for *a team approach*, stating that even though activities throughout the year may be held by a single group “they are part of the full, comprehensive program” (p.10) and that counselors, nor any partner, will be doing the work alone.

Building stronger partnerships with shared goals using quality practices. Research by Sheldon, Epstein and Galindo (2010) again reminds their audience that family engagement efforts need to utilize all 6 types of family engagement and stress that partnerships between the school and community should not be under-utilized in the effort to improve student outcomes. Using such partnerships to build a supportive and welcoming environment for families at school, to bring community volunteers and experts into classrooms in order to learn to teach specific skills, support student learning, or to mentor students, are all concepts that could be embraced by more schools. And as the study highlights, “the quality not quantity of activities was central for understanding the complex connections of involvement...”(p. 10). Quality and well prepared homework assignments were cited by Van Voorhis (2011) in the research of the Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) homework model and the resulting increase in student performance make this an especially provocative approach to consider in elementary and middle schools.

In her research, Hand (2012) discusses the barriers to including families with diverse cultures or backgrounds in family engagement efforts including understanding the real barriers and building strategies to address them. Similar to the issues raised in interviews with parents, liaisons and school leaders, language barriers, misconceptions about need and importance of family engagement, and that time, transportation and poverty must be acknowledged and addressed. Like other researchers,

she stresses the importance of having staff personnel reach out and ask families what they need and what types of involvement would be appropriate for them – using a co-construction approach to family engagement.

According to Sheldon and Jung (2015), programs that open dialogue between families and parents lead to trust, which increases family participation and engagement, and they identified home visits as an effective strategy. “Families with young children will readily respond to outreach and practices like these: Home visits from trained educators with cultural backgrounds similar to their own or with knowledge of their culture (Henderson and Mapp, 2002, p.61-62).” The literature emphasizes how schools forge relationships, but “Little research has examined whether family-engagement...leads to improved outcomes for students (Sheldon and Jung, 2015, p. 5).” Rather, aspirations are set for education and process. Teachers “invite families to share students’ interests and experiences in school and their hopes and dreams for their child (Sheldon & Jung, 2015, p. 4).” More than simply visiting a home, the teacher is trained to use the family’s domain and lead the parent to define their role in educating their child.

Hand (2012) and Henderson & Mapp (2002) note the need to provide specific training on family engagement to both pre-service and in-service teachers. Capse, Lopez, Chu and Weiss (2011) in their Issue Brief *Teaching the Teachers: Preparing Educators to Engage Families for Student Achievement* offers an easy to read and comprehend assessment of the needs to train educators and staff in quality practices. They highlighted in 2011, case studies of effective models already in existence and included the Teacher Education Redesign Initiative (TERI), an effort at the University of Minnesota. “Minnesota is the only state that has legislation and funding for licensed parent educators in all schools through the state; thus many students come to UMN for training to

become parent educators (Capse, Lopez, Chu, & Weiss, 2011, p. 12).” The report highlights that the University of Minnesota has, as a key area of the redesign process, the goal to partner with schools.

Cultural awareness and flexibility. Based on research from Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2008) on African American parents, Sakamoto (2017, p. 46) concludes:

“...flexible meeting locations, setting higher expectations of students, providing workshops on how to help at home, and inviting parents to be more involved were suggestions from parents on how to create more involvement in the school. Parent suggestions need to be acknowledged and considered because parents will be more likely to become involved if they feel schools are listening to their suggestions and trying to create a collegial atmosphere where families input is listened to and implemented.”

Additionally, these parents worried about teachers setting a lower academic bar for their students and understood that their children might benefit from more attention by the teachers if they, the parent, could volunteer. Barriers such as time, finances and work schedules were reported to interfere with their ability to do so (Sakamoto, 2017). Parents in that study also suggested that being offered skills so they could help their child at home, being personally asked to volunteer, and having more flexible locations for trainings as helpful changes that would increase their ability to be more involved with their child’s education. A final conclusion was that one way to increase family engagement was to make these parents feel that they had been heard and respected, implementing ideas and suggestions when possible, when parents are asked for or offered input. Many studies (Hand, 2012; Marschall and Shah, 2014) showed that when parents feel included, empowered and heard they are more likely to participate.

Research by Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey and Sander (2007) on motivations for family engagement support the concept that parental perceptions of their own skill levels or self-efficacy

affect their willingness to provide help at home and at schools. This suggests that improving the skills and comfort level would make them more likely to be involved in providing support to their children, and thus school efforts to increase academic outcomes for their students. Another interesting component of their research was around the demonstrated importance of the relationships between parents and their children and the school, and between the school and the home, including increasing parental involvement by utilizing invitations to participate from both students and the school. And, lastly, they found that their study supported other research showing that parental involvement does decrease as student age increases, but that involvement at all ages increases through the use of student and school invitation.

Finally, research by Sprick and Rich (2010) suggests to “meet families where they are at.” The authors nudge school leaders to rethink partnerships with parents; think outside the traditional box. How can you actually engage and not just involve? “No school will be able to engage every parent, but schools that meet families on their level of comfort will enjoy much higher levels of engagement. Just as good teachers scaffold their lesson plans to meet students where they are, schools implementing FEPs may need to make efforts outside the school at the beginning, meeting parents at their home or at community centers and asking them to focus on how they can improve their children’s education at home (Sprick and Rich 2010).”

Research and Analysis

The Research and Analysis section of this report involves exploring the gaps in legal compliance of the WBW Plan, the District Title I Plan, the PFIP, and the school level FEPs.¹⁰ Additional themes surfaced regarding the improved use of the FEPs in practice as a result of our interviews, surveys and group discussions that are of equal importance for consideration by SPPS in evaluation of its schools' FEPs. Largely, SPPS has established a robust research-based framework for assuring compliance with federal and state mandates involving family engagement.¹¹

Gaps in the WBW Plan

The SPPS WBW Plan ties various programs it is undertaking in its schools to five described qualities of how the state envisions districts will strive for the world's best workforce. This satisfies the requirement that the WBW Plan adopt a comprehensive, long-term strategic plan to support and improve teaching and learning that is aligned with creating the world's best workforce. Minn. Stat. § 120B.11, subd. 2. However, in addition, the WBW Plan is required to include the following seven specific pieces of information, none of which were evidenced in SPPS' WBW Plan:

1. Clearly defined district and school site goals and benchmarks for instruction and student achievement for all Subgroups;
2. A process to assess and evaluate each student's progress toward meeting state and local academic standards;
3. A system to periodically review and evaluate the effectiveness of all instruction and curriculum, taking into account strategies and best practices and student outcomes;
4. Strategies for improving instruction, curriculum, and student achievement, including the English and, where practicable, the native language development and the academic achievement of English learners;

¹⁰ A full legal overview of the federal and state provisions relating to family engagement is found at Appendix A. Capitalized terms from that legal overview are used throughout this report.

¹¹ The authors of this report acknowledge the significant work and achievements of SPPS in meeting federal and state mandates relating to family engagement. However, the specific purpose of this report, as requested by SPPS, was to identify gaps identified in meeting such federal and state mandates.

5. A process to examine the equitable distribution of teachers and strategies to ensure low-income and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, ineffective, or out-of-field teachers;
6. Education effectiveness practices that integrate high-quality instruction, rigorous curriculum, technology, and a collaborative professional culture that develops and supports teacher quality, performance, and effectiveness; and
7. An annual budget for continuing to implement the district WBW Plan.

Minn. Stat. § 120B.11, subd. 2.

Second, SPPS lists various councils, committees and task forces at the end of the WBW Plan, and it is presumed that SPPS intends to meet part of the mandate by simply noting their existence. However, this is not the intent of the law. Specific distinctions should be made, for example, for children with disabilities and English learners--are they held to the same benchmarks for instruction and student achievement as students from major racial and ethnic groups or economically disadvantaged students? The role of the Curriculum Advisory Committee provides another example where SPPS could be more intentional to articulate policy within the WBW Plan. Beyond listing the committee, there is no described system to periodically review and evaluate the effectiveness of all instruction and curriculum. These are only two examples for which SPPS may be meeting the mandates in practice, but the work is not reflected in the WBW Plan.

Third, the district, as part of its development of its WBW Plan, is required to ensure active community participation in all phases of planning and improving the instruction and curriculum affecting state and district academic standards. Minn. Stat. § 120B.11, subd. 3. In relation thereto, each school is required to establish a site team¹² to develop and implement strategies and education effectiveness practices to improve instruction, curriculum, cultural competencies, and student achievement at the school site, consistent with the district's WBW Plan. The site team is tasked with

¹² There is no restriction on using a previously existing committee or council for this purpose, provided it has at least one parent.

creating a curriculum improvement plan to align curriculum, assessment of student progress, and growth in meeting state and district academic standards and instruction. Minn. Stat. § 102B.11, subd. 4. There is no evidence within the WBW Plan or the FEPs that such site teams are in place at each school.

Fourth, while a minor point, SPPS directs people to various websites for additional information on the opening page of the WBW Plan; however, they are no longer accurate sites and a user is not automatically redirected. Despite knowing what document should be found, it was difficult or impossible to find them through the SPPS website.

Finally, some of the articulated programs within the WBW Plan could easily hook into what the district and individual schools are already doing with ESEA programs. FEPs at the school level should be making a connection to the WBW Plan. Also, if the list of district councils, committees and task forces are established committees to which any parent may become a member, they should be noted and discussed as part of the District Title I Plan and FEPs. A prompt to be included in the FEP Template would be beneficial to properly distribute this information with regard to family engagement.

Gaps in the District Title I Plan

There was a lack of coordination of federal and state programs identified. As part of implementing all Title I mandates, the district, as with school FEPs that will be described in more detail below, is required to coordinate and integrate family engagement programs and activities with other federal, state and local programs relating to family engagement. As noted herein, there is no question that the district and its schools have developed and implemented programs under each of the laws studied as part of this report and they should be specifically identified and integrated into the District Title I Plan.

It was unclear whether there was development of the District Title I Plan with all

required stakeholders. The District Title I Plan is to be developed with various stakeholders, to include teachers, principals, other schools leaders, administrators, other appropriate school personnel, and parents of children in schools served under Title I. 20 U.S.C. § 6312, Sec. 1112(a). Likewise, programs using Title I funds must be planned and implemented with “meaningful consultation with parents of participating children.” 20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(a)(1). SPPS is also required to conduct, with the meaningful involvement of parents and family members, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the District Title I Plan. 20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(a)(2). From review of the District Title I Plan, it appears DPAC is used to meet the parental involvement requirement, but it is unclear whether members of the DPAC are aware that they are being used in that role or for that purpose. More than one former DPAC member interviewed indicated they were not aware they were being solicited for such consultation and had they known would have asserted themselves differently in the meetings (personal communication, November 30, 2017).

It is unclear whether SPPS is educating school teachers and staff about family engagement. The district and the schools are responsible for educating teachers and school staff, with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of contributions of parents and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, how to implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and the schools. 20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(e)(4). There is no evidence within the District Title I Plan that compliance with this mandate is occurring. SPPS can and should take the lead in ensuring such education is taking place for all school teachers and staff.

Gap in Minnesota’s PFIP

SPPS has formally adopted and implemented a PFIP under Minnesota law that promotes and supports various partnerships with parents and ways to improve student achievement. Minn. Stat. §

124D.8955; SPPS Policy Manual, Policy No. 615.00. As part of its PFIP, SPPS is required to convene an advisory committee composed of an equal number of resident parents and school staff to make recommendations to the school board on developing and evaluating its PFIP, to include barriers to parent involvement. Although it may be occurring, there is no indication that this advisory committee exists in either the District Title I Plan or the FEPs.

Gaps in School-Level Family Engagement Plans

In relation to school FEPs, the first analysis performed was a comparison of federal Title I mandates with regard to family engagement (to include current district FEP guidance comprised of both the FEP Template and FEP Rubric), with what is drafted by SPPS' schools in their FEPs. The following represent some of the largest gaps identified.

There was a lack of coordination of federal and state programs identified. Schools implementing all Title I mandates are required, to the extent feasible, to coordinate and integrate family engagement programs and activities with other federal, state and local programs. 20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(e). Such coordination should, for the purposes of this report, include: (1) Title II funds to increase student achievement; (2) Title III funds to assist in the achievement of English learners; (3) Title IV funds to provide both student support and academic enrichment grants and 21st Century Learning Centers; (4) Title VI to assist in the achievement of Indian students; (5) students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and (6) Minnesota's World's Best Workforce Plan (WBW Plan), Achievement and Integration Program (AIP) and Parent and Family Involvement Policy (PFIP).

Mandate Overlap and Coordination

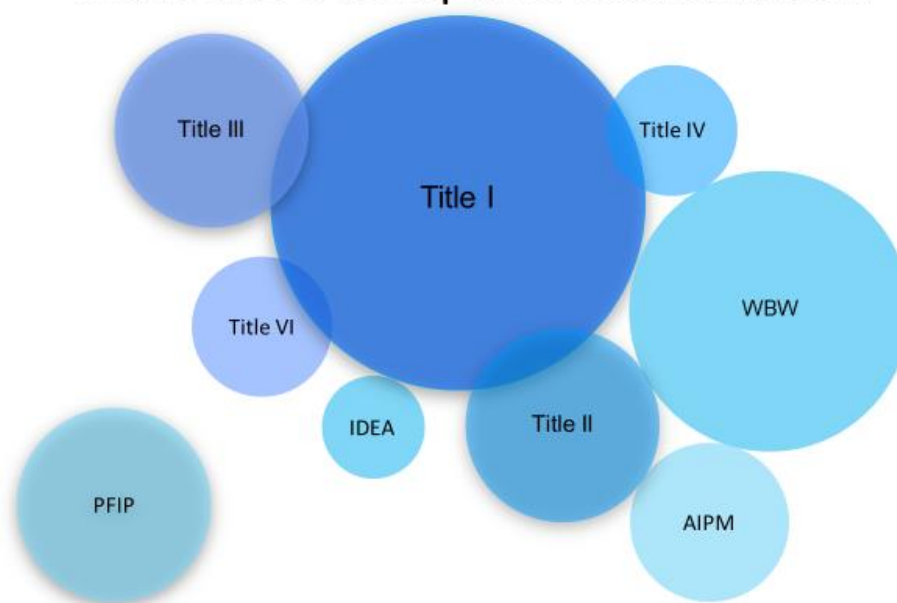


Figure 1: Family engagement mandates overlap and touch in various legislation

While it may seem these are too many programs to consider, each have either overlapping or complementary processes to involve parents or desired outcomes from the respective policies. Title I is meant to concentrate on the following subgroups of students: (1) economically disadvantaged students; (2) students from major racial and ethnic groups; (3) children with disabilities; and (4) English learners (hereinafter collectively Subgroups). 20 U.S.C. § 6311, Sec. 1111(c)(2). Programs under the federal and state laws described above both require family engagement and specifically concentrate on student achievement for each Subgroup. Accordingly, there should be a specific section of the FEP that lists programs targeting all Subgroups under all of the above-described laws. Based on SPPS documentation, a review of FEPs, and the FEP guidance documentation to schools from SPPS, it is unclear whether any current programs requiring and seeking family engagement other than under Title I are identified in the schools' FEPs.

For example, the AIPM was established to not only pursue racial integration, but economic integration in order to increase student academic achievement. Presumably economic integration

has been considered by SPPS and its schools, though evidence in FEPs and FEP Template and Rubric is missing. Likewise, IDEA specifically targets a Subgroup, but programs implemented under IDEA are not mentioned as part of the FEP Template. As a final example, SPPS supports 21st Century Learning Centers under Title IV; however, they were not identified in any of the FEPs reviewed.

Considerations:

A one-page overview of federal and state mandates relating to family engagement (Appendix B), *School Responsibilities to Involve Parents*, was created to remind principals and staff of the family engagement mandates. This document is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all parent-related mandates, but is meant to serve as a quick, practical reference in place of the more comprehensive legal overview (see Appendix A). Schools are likely to find reassurance that they are already doing many things right and well, but it might also prompt a further look into areas that have been missed in the past.

As part of its FEP Rubric, SPPS could prompt its schools to include programs they are undertaking under other state and federal programs relating to family engagement. The FEP Template should also include direct links to the school's Compact and SCIP, and the district's WBW Plan.

Curriculum is not described within the FEPs. Curriculum is a clearly defined requirement for individual schools to consider when drafting their FEPs. First, the FEP must provide parents with “a description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school.” 20 U.S.C. § 1116(c)(4)(ii). Second, in coordination with the FEP, each school's Compact is required to contain a description of the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction. Further required is a description of the supportive and effective learning environment that will enable the children to meet the challenging State academic standards. 20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(d).

Fulfillment of these mandates, if being judged solely by the FEP Template and Rubric provided by SPPS to its schools, is not being met. The lone mention of curriculum in the FEP Template falls under “opportunities for families to build connections to the school and to each

other.” The SPPS FEP Rubric suggests that schools include “strategies to provide parents with information about curriculum, assessments, and grade-level proficiency.” However, a review of the FEPs shows that most schools only describe events such as “math night,” which does not rise to the level of meeting the intent of this federal mandate.

According to the research, significant barriers to family engagement relate directly to curriculum; when parents feels a lack of knowledge, fear of incompetence and negative personal experience (Kaya & Lundeen, 2010; Van Voorhis, 2003). With increased knowledge of curriculum and tools regarding how to study that curriculum at home with their children, parents gain confidence and are more likely to engage with their children.

Considerations:

Include a separate provision for curriculum in the FEP Template and FEP Rubric to prompt schools for full inclusion of this federal mandate in their FEPs.

Meaningful Two-Way Parent Communication. SPPS has adopted a PFIP that promotes and supports “oral and written communication between home and school that is regular, two-way, meaningful, and in families’ native language.” Minn. Stat. § 124D.8955(a). Family-school Compacts must include a statement that addresses the importance of communication between teachers and parents. Prescriptively, this regular, ongoing communication must be “two-way” and “meaningful” between family members and school staff, and, to the extent practicable, in a language that family members can understand. 20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(d).

Epstein’s second tenet in her framework lays out the following definition relating to parent-school communication: “Communicating—Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress (Epstein, 2000. p. 41).” Policymakers used her research and definition when penning federal and state family engagement

policy, as updated terminology now includes “two-way” and “meaningful” to describe how schools must communicate with families.

One-on-one communication when school staff and parents can listen to one another about what is going on with the student’s learning is one picture of two-way, meaningful communication, but this can also be done with groups of parents. One parent, who has been active at a SPPS middle and high school, described her participation on a committee to address behavior problems at a high school. The parent described a constructive meeting led by the staff and principal, who listened to them and eight parents who represented the predominant races and ethnicities in the school. Among other policies, they engaged in a discussion about proposed changes in dress code. To the parent, the experience was built around jointly solving problems. It did not feel like a group of parents sitting around reviewing a completed proposed policy from the school, which is how FEP reviews were described by some respondents (November 15, 2017). This parent used “community effort” and “buy-in” to frame what the school managed to do, which led to the success of the school’s new policy (personal communication, November 17, 2017).

Methods of engagement described as effective in interviews included robocalls, email, phone calls, and newsletters, but it was clear that liaisons understood the importance of taking advantage of any face-to-face interaction. They stressed how important it is to find parents in the hall and have two-way conversations. Another liaison makes sure that during parent-teacher conferences, staff are taking advantage of the rare face-to-face opportunity to share documentation about the school and the child and let parents understand and discuss it (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

When face-to-face is not possible, schools use phone calls and e-mail. One liaison estimated that they also reach out to six parents by phone per day (personal communication, November 15, 2017). Liaisons stressed that including positive notes home is important to building relationships

and improving parental attitudes toward school. Postcards are used at one high school to send positive messages about specific instances of student progress. Understanding how busy teachers are, the liaison offers to look up postal addresses and put stamps on the postcards the school sends home to parents about a child's accomplishments (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Figure 2 introduces in graphic representation a thread that is intended to illustrate the chain of implementing family engagement policy. The figure, used throughout this section, will expand to bring more considerations later. The example used throughout will focus on policy for two-way, meaningful communication between school and home. While SPPS FEP guidance on meaningful, two-way communication could be improved to include specific language (now refers only to “many ways”), other examples could have served this just as well. The use of this example is not meant to make this finding more meaningful than others.

POLICY INTENTION: One-way written communication has not been shown to be as effective and meaningful as the two-way communication. Two-way methods suggested by Epstein.

MANDATES: 20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(d) and Minn. Stat. § 124D.8955(a) emphasize "oral and written communication between home and school that is regular, two-way, and meaningful."

Figure 2: Policy Implementation Thread: Policy to Mandate Level

Analysis of Stakeholders in Family Engagement Processes

Community Partnerships. Critical to Title I programming, as well as a focus of Title IV programming, the WBW Plan and PFIP, is the integration of community members and partnerships to assist in not only the development of various plans and strategy, but direct involvement in specific programming. Not only are community partnerships emphasized in federal and state laws, Epstein highlights the importance of collaborating with community partners to identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programming, family practices and student learning development.

While the FEP Template provides a section for community partners, our review of FEPs show that most schools simply list its community partners. There is, however, no indication as to what programs the community partners are involved in, or as to whether or how these community partners include family engagement as part of their programs. For example, Title IV of ESEA contains a provision for 21st Century Learning Centers, which "provide opportunities for communities to establish or expand activities in community learning centers that [in relevant part] offer families of students served by community learning centers opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children's education, including opportunities for literacy and related educational development." 20 U.S.C. §§ 7171, Sec. 4201(a)(3) and (b)(1)(B). While SPPS has

certainly established 21st Century Learning Centers, there was no mention of such programming in the FEPs reviewed.¹³

Considerations:

Include more guidance within the FEP Rubric to prompt schools to explain the full range of community partnerships in their family engagement programs.

Missing evidence of parent engagement in the FEPs. Each school receiving Title I funds must, together with parents and family members of participating children, develop the FEP, which FEP must be agreed upon by the parents. 20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(b)(1). Of the 28 FEPs reviewed, only one school provided a parent's name as a documented contributor to a 2017-2018 FEP. Otherwise, there was no way to discern whether parents were involved in the drafting of any school's FEP. The FEP template does not ask if a parent contributed to the FEP or require a parent name, as it prompts for names of the liaison involved in developing the FEP. Despite the family engagement mandate for drafting of the FEPs, it did not appear to be required for schools to publicly share evidence of parent participation.

Academic research by Ferrara (2009) and Sakamoto (2017) suggests families should be involved when the school develops family engagement policy, though this was not a consistent practice seen at SPPS schools. Of 21 liaisons surveyed, 19% reported their school had FEP meetings without any parents involved. An additional 43% had between 1 and 7 parents contributing to their school's FEP; and only 14% of schools had more than 12 parents contributing to their school's FEP. Similarly, a combined 38% indicated parents were either slightly involved or not involved at all in creating their school's FEP. Another 38% indicated parents were "somewhat involved" in creating their school's FEP. Only 24% of liaisons indicated parents were "involved" in creating their

¹³ Within the SPPS district, 21st Century Learning Centers are referred to as "Flipside" programs and are braided together with Extended Day Learning (EDL) offerings at middle schools.

school's FEP, and not one indicated parents were "very much involved" in the creation of their school's FEP.

One parent who participated in the FEP process at their son's elementary school could not recall what the document was about nor the experience. After receiving the FEP during the interview by email, there was brief recollection of a meeting with some other parents, where they all heard about what the school was doing. The parents at the FEP meeting all agreed the school was doing a good job, and that was the extent of the process, according to this parent (personal communication, November 29, 2017).

Very few examples of parental input to FEPs could be recalled by interviewees, but that did not mean schools undervalue parent input. A liaison, who has worked at more than one SPPS school in a liaison role, stated that schools will call in the parents they can always count on to come in to review the FEP, mostly to cross off the compliance requirement (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

A principal takes advantage of their very active PTA each year and attends their meetings to address the FEP. This principal makes use of an admittedly limited audience—about 20 parents who attend PTA meetings—and asks, "What do you want to see next year?" This principal believes they are fortunate to have good overall engagement, though acknowledged that other schools have even more engagement (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Team effort. Lack of family engagement aside, schools should approach family engagement as a collective effort, because one person at a school cannot and should not be solely responsible for the writing, implementing, and thorough understanding of the FEP. However, a conversation with the SPPS Title I Office revealed this is a common practice though.

Everyone at a school should be invested, trained at the same level and be exactly on the same page when it comes to what it means to engage families. We should always be asking ourselves, “Who is writing the FEPs? Do they have support? Is it just them? Do they have others to bounce ideas off of?” This fact can make a huge difference in the outcome of the FEPs. (personal communication, November 7, 2017)

The 2017-2018 FEPs provided scant detail in sections that teachers would likely fill in best.¹⁴ The role of teachers in the FEP rarely came up in interviews. There is not a strong connection between teachers and the FEP. For example, very few schools provided a hint that they were mastering for outcomes for the FEP prompt: "Staff develop model approaches or pilot strategies to engage families in student learning." Similarly, "student progress is celebrated with families" was poorly represented in the FEPs, though it is likely that schools do much more work than was documented.

Expanding the team effort further, Epstein & Van Voorhis (2010) propose redefining the role of school counselors, who have been trained to understand children and families. Their expertise can improve the school’s partnerships with parents and the community to holistically improve student outcomes in academics, attendance and behavior.

Considerations:

SPPS could broaden participation in FEP strategic planning and other processes to include teachers, counselors, and other staff (and of course families) to create a more school wide accountability for robust family engagement. This could also help stabilize family engagement efforts from year to year when staff changes and families move or transition.

¹⁴ While the involvement of teachers in the development of FEPs is not required under federal law, it is asserted that it would be beneficial to do so not only to improve the quality of the FEP, but to assist in buy-in from teachers with regard to family engagement programs and practices within their school.

Principal involvement in the FEP process. Having the support of top school leaders generally, and its principal specifically, is key to a successful school family engagement effort (Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein, 2008). While academic research suggests principals must be involved in family engagement strategy, the family liaison survey communicated that principals do not guarantee ideal implementation. When isolating responses from liaisons where principals led the FEP writing (rather than liaisons), liaisons suggested these schools were *less likely* to: include parents, update the FEP year to year, and craft stronger strategy and practices. It is possible one principal revealed the belief of some peers when describing what they saw as the “right amount” of parent engagement. According to this principal, there can be too much for the school to remain effective and efficient.

In practice, the survey of family liaisons revealed that only 14% of the schools had principals who were the primary writers of their school’s FEP, while 71% of the family liaisons indicated they were the primary writers. Nonetheless, 33% of the family liaisons indicated their school’s principal/assistant principal was very involved in contributing to their school’s FEP, 5% indicated their school’s principal/assistant principal was not involved at all, and 19% indicated their school’s principal/assistant principal was slightly involved.

A principal’s competing demands and priorities likely play a role in FEP involvement, as well as their perspective toward compliance requirements. There was little indication in the research that an involved principal/assistant principal in the FEP correlated to sound family engagement leadership, though it may warrant attention.

Considerations:

SPPS might ask principal, liaisons and other staff working on family engagement to share their best practices in FEP processes with other schools.

The role of liaisons. While principals/assistant principals focus on the many demands of their professions, many schools are served by a liaison. Not every school has a designated liaison¹⁵. Funding availability for the position is related to the percentage of children on free and reduced-lunch, one principal explained. At this principal's previous school, where 97% of the families met the free and reduced-lunch qualification, they had more funding than they knew how to spend. Now, the principal personally handles tasks filled by the liaison at the prior school due to the fact that, while still receiving Title I funds, there are fewer families who meet the free and reduced-lunch qualification (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

At other schools with liaisons, attrition was reported to be high. It is often a paraprofessional status and funded for less than full-time. One designated liaison reported she is in the building four full days per week, but half of that time is split with clerical work (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

In interviews, liaisons revealed wide-ranging job descriptions. Most liaisons wear several hats, such as answering phones and overseeing several lunchroom shifts. Schools seemed to define roles based on gaps of resources and matching skills to needs. Retrofitting the liaison role to disparate school needs may be reflected by what was observed as less conventional working spaces liaisons are provided, such as a shared, busy open meeting room or a discipline space (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

MDE explained how common it is for schools to piece together job descriptions that happen to include the important function of leading family engagement compliance. "Some staff in schools already have demanding jobs, like a behavior specialist, also are asked to wear the hat of family engagement. This can be an impossible task and most often that job gets put on the back burner."

¹⁵ A question about the impact of schools without liaisons is raised in the Recommendations for Further Research at the end of the Research and Analysis section.

Consequently, the lack of understanding and training on how to lead the FEP process can lead to staff with “minimum understanding” of the law struggling to deal with its complexities (personal communication, November 7, 2017).

Liaisons varied in involvement with the FEP from zero to complete control at SPPS schools. In at least one school, a liaison is listed as the contact for the FEP, but had nothing to do with developing it. The FEP template suggests listing the liaison name and contact information, regardless of who in the school wrote the FEP or led the revision process that year. When asked about the FEP in an interview, the liaison was not able or willing to speak about the FEP (personal communication, November 15, 2017). If the district has the intention that the liaison represent the FEP to parents and staff, then there is disconnect in that intention and practice.

The role of the paraprofessional, part-time liaison may or may not be the ideal choice to play a leading role in defining and leading family engagement, and the most family engagement a school does happens on a daily basis by the many teachers not addressed in this study. The question of leadership needs likely vary by school, but no liaison reported standing up regularly at staff meetings or serving in a leadership role for teachers. It was unclear how visible and useful liaisons are to teachers and principals, and how much they coordinate. For example, areas on the FEP that would need teacher input, such as “Staff differentiate family engagement strategies according to student achievement goals” were rarely addressed.

While the professional relationships between principals, teachers and liaisons were not a focus of the study, at least a picture of district support for liaisons was made somewhat clear in the scope of the study. Despite limited funding and inconsistency of schools having the liaison position, SPPS organizes monthly district meetings for liaisons (or those leading family engagement), provides thorough guidance, and offers other support, as observed. In an attempt to illustrate what

may look like an ideal level of support to make a liaison an active, strategic leader, *Figure 3* represents a picture of a district, principal, and teachers propping up and coordinating with an empowered liaison.

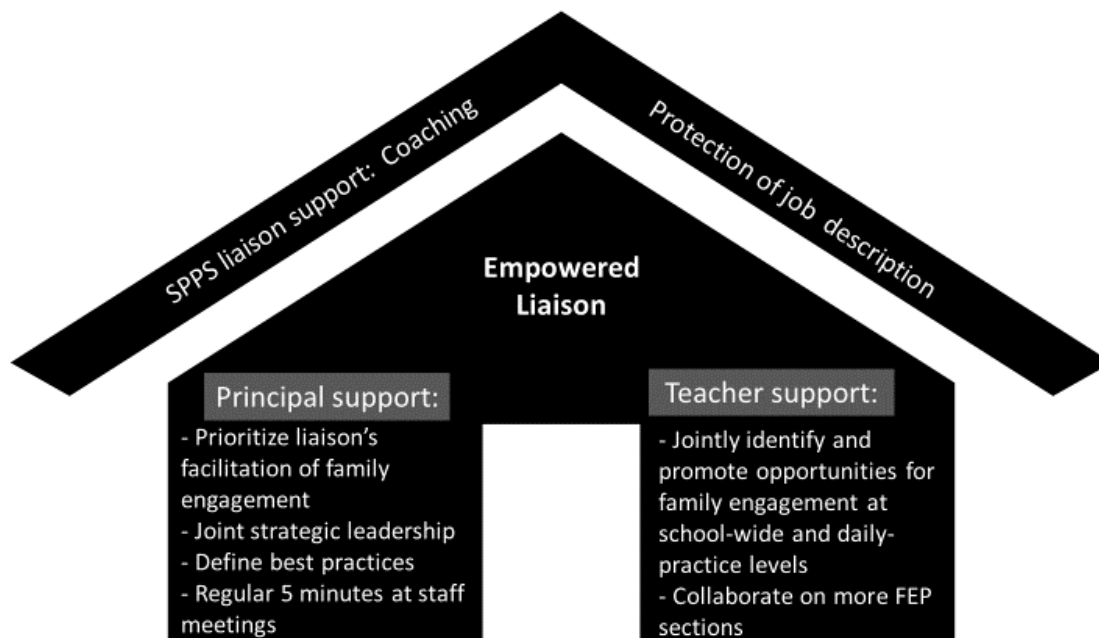


Figure 3: Structurally supporting the liaison position to address family engagement

Considerations:

Encourage schools to protect and support the liaison role as a family engagement leader. Consider a permanent minimum half-time position focused solely on family engagement and partnerships. Discourage diluting their focus on too many issues not related to meaningful engagement practices and leadership. Suggest visible and meaningful leadership, such as liaisons regularly stand up at staff meetings for 5-10 minutes to engage with staff and keep family engagement strategy on the minds of everyone.

FEP Review

In terms of FEP guidance, SPPS has provided liaisons, principals and other staff with a user-friendly FEP Rubric and Template. The FEP guidance is mostly successful in guiding schools to specifically cover the compliance requirements, but is less successful in guiding schools to embrace the expectations and vision for ideal practices SPPS shares as “Implementing with Quality” and

“Mastering for Outcomes.” Reviewing 28 FEPs with a scoring system developed for this study revealed that schools scored highest in meeting the minimum compliance areas. Where the district and schools can do better, the scoring system revealed patterns of question marks and zeros, a sample of which can be seen in *Figure 4*.

FEP Quality Assessment (adapted from SPPS FEP Guidance). Integration of Title I, Title III, SPED and SPPS Requirements and Quality Indicators: Full (2), partial (1) or non-(0) response scores

FEP Activity Prompt:	Welcoming Environment		
	Working to change practices & systems by identifying barriers that make it harder for students of color to succeed & for their families to support learning.		
	For more about our work on racial equity, contact:		
FEP Evidence of Implementation Level:	Law/policy: SPPS §1001	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for Outcomes
SCHOOL	Describe where to find more information about your work on racial equity.	Use racial equity guiding questions for family and community engagement in planning, implementing, and evaluating family engagement strategies	Families are actively involved in racial equity work at school; Staff honor and recognize families' funds of knowledge
Agape Sr High	2	?	?
Benjamin E. Mays Elem	2	2	1
Boys Totem Town Sr High	0	2	?
Bruce Vento Elementary	1	?	?
Chelsea Heights Elem	1	1	?
Cherokee Heights Elem	2	2	2
Como Park Elementary	1	2	?
Como Park Sr High	2	2	2
Farnsworth Elementary	2	2	?
Farnsworth Middle	2	2	?
Frost Lake Elementary	0	1	1
Gordon Parks Sr High	1	1	?

Figure 4: Small Sample of the FEP Scoring Table Developed for this Study

There are limitations in reviewing a plan, which is not equivalent to reviewing a practice. Further, questions rooted in pragmatism and empathy arose, such as, what are reasonable expectations for school leadership and staff facing the 23 activity prompts in the FEP? Important

details of family engagement policies and practices were often summarized by a few bullet points, and there was a limited body of work to discern actual school performance. For example, an interview respondent described her proactive role in a high school's postcard program, which the school uses to celebrate success of academic achievement (personal communication, November 15, 2017), but very few concrete practices to celebrate success were identified in the FEPs. The phrasing of the prompt for this activity is not "Share how you celebrate student success/achievement." Rather, underneath the compliance prompt, it reads, "Report cards and progress reports will be distributed." Following it is the Mastering for Outcomes explanation, "Student progress is celebrated with families." The lack of specific guidance or hints for this prompt are likely leading to underreporting of the schools' efforts, and this is probably true of other prompts, i.e. schools do more to engage families than the FEP can possibly cover.

One example where the FEP Template is potentially limiting responses from schools is the racial equity prompt. The Template suggests that schools only provide contact information of the school official in charge of equity matters. Many schools followed the prompt and left it at that, leaving questions about whether they participate in diversity training and use it in the school. Several schools exceeded the prompt's expectation and described some of their related training and events with parents. However, very few schools reached the Mastering for Outcomes level and addressed how "Families are actively involved in racial equity work at school; staff honor and recognize families' funds of knowledge." While SPPS shared a good vision for ways the school should seek parent input, there is lack of evidence that recommended practices for this guidance were shared. Appendix J highlights other areas of the FEP Template and FEP Rubric where little information was provided by schools (scores were mostly "?" or "0" or "n/a"), which may indicate need for further clarification.

Closely examining the 2017-2018 FEPs also led to questions about accountability systems that link plans and execution. Questions about accountability span school-parent, school-district, and district-state levels. Funding limits regular, robust monitoring and evaluation that would provide evidence of programs meeting indicators on a larger scale. However, there are low-cost, low-burden options for smaller-scale efforts to understand the degree to which schools implement policies and practices in the FEP each year.

For example, there are ways to track success of “Share the customer service expectation at your school,” which has a Mastering for Outcomes description: “Staff members have a common expectation of response time to parents’ communication.” Most schools described a 24-hour policy to return phone calls and emails to parents, but no school described the staff’s expectations or performance. It was unclear if there is an accountability system to track indicators for this policy, but the school has an opportunity to set targets and let parents know how well they are performing. If the FEP described the results or goals for a monitoring and evaluation indicator, then the FEP could address a specific number of complaints its email complaint address (or survey) receives from parents about teachers who fail to respond within 24 hours. Where realistic and not overly burdensome, this level of concrete detail would bring additional clarity and accountability to school FEPs and practices.

Considerations:

Review at the district level ways to improve the FEP Template and FEP Rubric in those areas where there are many “0”s and “?”s in the FEP Scoring Review Table (Appendix J).

Identify indicators and low-burden, low-cost tracking to evaluate key areas in the FEP, such as an option for parents to report anonymously through a designated email address or through a quarterly survey.

FEP-based compliance gaps for meeting legal documentation requirements. Most of the 28 schools examined would have very few findings in an audit of their FEP documentation if auditors followed this system. However, the following sections of the FEPs would likely not meet mandate compliance. For each, at least five schools did not follow the guidance SPPS provided and comply with the following documentation requirements:

- “Families of students needing academic improvement are involved in writing the SCIP and FEP in an organized, ongoing, and timely way” as required by Title I, Section 1116(b)(1) and (c)(3).
- “Assistance is provided for parents to understand their child’s progress” as required by Title I, Section 1116(e)(1).

POLICY INTENTION: One-way written communication has not been shown to be as effective and meaningful as the two-way communication. Two-way methods are suggested by Epstein.



MANDATES: 20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(d) and Minn. Stat. § 124D.8955(a) emphasize “oral and written communication between home and school that is regular, two-way, and meaningful.”



SPPS: Our school communicates with families in many ways. Communication strategies and materials are reviewed annually by families for effectiveness, and are revised or changed based on family feedback

Figure 5: Policy Implementation Thread to District Level

Building on the illustration of Figure 2, Figure 5 adds the importance of SPPS FEP guidance in helping schools meet the policy and mandate intentions around school communication strategies with families. SPPS uses identical language to lead schools to meet the compliance mandates, but in this case, SPPS does not use the words “two-way” or “meaningful.” The mandates use this language, and compliance would require descriptions of specifically this type of communication. For example, if a school describes only newsletters and large events for parents, the school would

not be describing “two-way” communication. Schools were mostly consistent in following guidance by the district for the FEPs to meet the mandates, but rely on SPPS FEP guidance to prompt them.

Consideration:

Prioritize improvements in the FEP guidance for the compliance-related areas identified in this section.

Broad Observations Regarding Implementation

FEPs are not undertaken as a strategic process. Interviews and surveys revealed that FEPs are not undertaken as a strategic process within schools. Principals and liaisons were asked, “Is there a system in place at your school that either requires or prompts someone to step back and examine the bigger picture for what type of family engagement has been working or not working? How do you know you’re making progress or doing a good job?” Few described a big-picture evaluation of what works or SWOT analysis, which would serve as the cornerstone to any strategic planning process.

A strategic planning process requires leadership by the executive (principal), an empowered leader (liaison), and buy-in from staff (teachers) to examine how to best engage stakeholders (parents). Figure 6 illustrates the necessity for each player to provide critical, respective input at a school’s annual FEP meeting or meeting to specifically address policies for how the school communicates with families. The principal is needed for leadership, the teachers and parents as the main participants in the policies, and the liaison to facilitate, follow up, and document. Unfortunately, liaisons reported that these meetings are rarely strategic in nature and lack participation and buy-in from teachers (personal communication, November 15, 2017). This reduces the level of insight of a key player, which further breaks down the strategic importance of the FEP-related meeting.

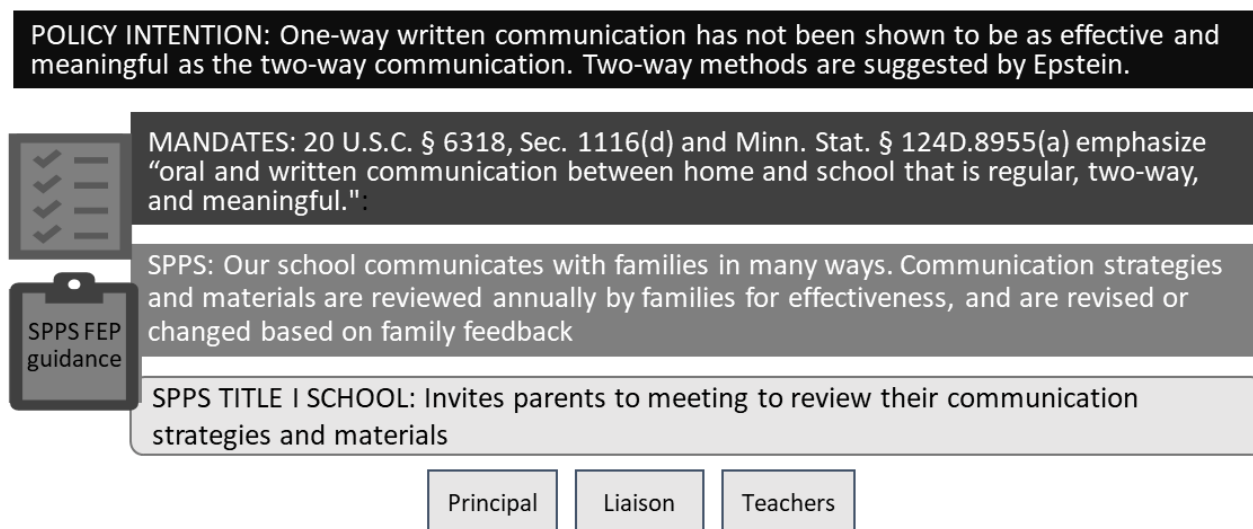


Figure 6: Policy Implementation Thread: Policy to Mandate to School Leadership and Staff

A FEP process may sound like a strategic planning process, but little evidence could be found that it is used this way in practice. A survey of family liaisons revealed that only 33% of family liaisons strongly agreed that their school’s FEP fully reflects the school’s family engagement strategy and practices, and 14% somewhat disagreed that the FEP reflects school strategy. Similarly, the survey revealed that only 14% of family liaisons strongly agreed that their school’s FEP led the school to improve family engagement strategy and practices; while 10% somewhat disagreed and 28% could neither agree nor disagree with that statement. Of the liaisons who said their FEP had been updated significantly from the previous year, a majority were neutral on whether the FEP had improved school family engagement strategy and practice.

Liaisons who indicated greater parent contributions to the FEP, i.e. “Parent Engagers,” provide some insight into perspectives and practices. Parent Engagers tended to indicate more strongly that the FEP fully reflects the school’s family engagement strategy and practices, but they were not necessarily believers that the FEP requirement improved strategy and practices within its school. The improvements suggested by the Parent Engagers leaned toward making the FEP process

more parent-friendly and streamlined. The Parent Engagers were more likely to indicate they want more parent involvement in the FEP process.

Active parents in the district did not recognize the FEPs role in guiding school strategy. A survey of 10 very active¹⁶ Latino parents¹⁷ asked them to propose a new program for improving outcomes for their children. The Latino group has been developing a proposal for a community-based mentoring program, which is what 80% proposed. They were then asked what platforms the school has to communicate their suggestion. In contrast to using a PAC or e-mail (60%), only 20% of parents recognized the FEP as a helpful process for communicating a suggestion for improving or proposing programs.

Unlike a strategic plan written every 5-10 years for an organization, the FEP is not a zero-based exercise that starts over each year and leads to rethinking parent engagement with a SWOT analysis and discussion. As school representatives described it, updating the FEP involves bringing in parents to review either last year's version or the proposed updates to last year's version for next year's version. Interview respondents suggested there are two FEP meetings per year when parents are invited.

Linking FEPs to student achievement. A cornerstone of Title I is that programs supporting family engagement must link to improving student achievement. The stated purpose of Title I of ESEA is to “provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.” 20 U.S.C. § 6301, Sec. 1001. In connecting academic research to Title I to what should happen in its schools, MDE articulated during an interview: “When you start looking at the Epstein tool, she’s very, very clear...we want to raise

¹⁶ It is important to distinguish “very active” parents, who in this case were part of a Latino group that meets monthly at the district. They clearly distinguish themselves from parents who very rarely participate in school and district events, whose attitudes would likely be different. This study did not reach such parents.

¹⁷ The survey was translated into Spanish and administered with help from SPPS. The survey questions and responses can be found in Appendix E.

student achievement....Family engagement should be supporting your academic goals (personal communication, October 24, 2017).”

Parents interviewed through a focus group, interviews, and surveys mostly indicated that the school and district value their voices and input, but compliance mandates for parent inclusion, such as the FEP, were not providing impressionable processes to do so. Through a survey, 10 very active Latino parents of children in various SPPS schools were asked, “How much do you influence the quality of your child’s education by being active with the school and district?” An impressive 80% responded “very much.” However, the same survey revealed how little the FEP is viewed as a utility of parent input. Not a single parent recognized the FEP’s relation to academic outcomes¹⁸. In what is likely an indication of parents’ perspective of compliance-required documentation in general, no parent recognized the Compact either, which has a stated purpose of establishing “the shared responsibility for student success between the school, families, and students” (SPPS, 2017).

Epstein and Van Voorhis (2010) suggest “There should be a close connection between the design and purpose of an involvement activity with the outcome of interest.” As Epstein and Van Voorhis state in their research with John Hopkins University program using Action Team Partnerships (p.5), “*Each* district and *each* school in NNPS must *tailor* or *customize* its partnership program and selected practices to match its goals for student success.” SPPS has developed rubrics and forms to help guide schools, but the schedules for school SCIP and FEP processes do not align the necessary link between school and student goals and listed activities are not clearly outlined nor known or understood by families and staff at the schools.

The FEP was not seen as playing a meaningful role by one principal in improving student outcomes, but felt the Compact addressed it. One liaison confirmed there is no way to evaluate

¹⁸ Survey question: Which of the following does your school or district do well already to help Hispanic students perform better academically? (Put a check next to all you believe make a positive impact).

effectiveness of a FEP by searching for relationships with academic outcomes. However, linking activities to student achievement and school goals was stressed during the interview with MDE, where it was stated:

If your school hasn't done well in math – what are we doing? Because you have to be able to talk about the curriculum, you have to be able to talk about the standards, you have to talk about the benchmarks, so parents know. You have to have activities that are going to support students' math skills. So, having your typical fall carnival okay...I'm not saying you can't do it, but how you are going to do that to support math? (personal communication October 24, 2017)

School interview respondents offered a variety of framing to connect the FEP and improvement in academic outcomes. When asked specifically about it, one principal offered that the link to outcomes can be found in specific individualized learning examples in the FEP (personal communication, November 15, 2017). One liaison explained, “We are working to develop a school and classroom climate that is culturally responsive so families feel welcome and students feel supported so they can excel academically” (personal communication, November 17, 2017). Another liaison suggested the FEP summarizes the content of a toolbox families use at home. Pointing to one box of the FEP as an example, the liaison described technology's importance to engagement and the school's role in helping parents register for Schoology and iUpdate, methods parents use at home to track academic progress. This respondent believes the time-consuming efforts to teach parents to use this new technology is an investment in parents, who learn to be involved in their child's education. The liaison provided an example for how parents using Schoology might interact with their child: “I see you missed your assignment or quiz last week. What happened there?” (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Considerations:

SPPS may benefit by adjusting their planning/writing of the FEP and Compact to coincide with the drafting of the SCIP so that outcomes can be aligned. It might be helpful to consider adding a column on the FEP that states what outcome each activity is targeting on the SCIP, as it does in its correlation with Epstein's six pillars of a quality Family Engagement Program.

Utilize pre-existing tools and supports to assist schools with their various plans and evaluations if doing them "in house" is too burdensome for school or district staff. If MDE begins to accept NPPS templates and forms as meeting compliance, SPPS might consider rejoining that group so they could utilize their ready-made tools.

FEP as Living Document Rather than Compliance Checklist. In interviews, most principals and liaisons described the FEP as largely a compliance document they "just have to get through." (November 15, 2017). One liaison shared how peers grumble when gathered at the district level, about the "busy work" it represents.

In contrast to viewing the FEP as a checklist item, Title I and MDE staff believe the FEP should serve as a living document that is regularly updated and serves to guide the school and inform parents (personal communication, October 24, 2017). When asked if they would be suspicious of a school that only updated dates on a FEP year-to-year, MDE responded, "Absolutely, because everything is different all the time. Family engagement is about student achievement and you are always looking at your school goals (personal communication, October 24, 2017)."

When discussing how often FEPs are modified, one liaison admitted having no plans to update the FEP that year (November 15, 2017). Even if this liaison wanted to update it, it seemed daunting that they would be required to bring in parents for every change. Bringing in parents served as another bureaucratic hurdle, which might further dissuade a liaison from taking a deeper dive into updating it. The liaison commented on having heard the term "living document" used for the FEP, and wondered how it was even possible (personal communication, November 15, 2017). Our survey of liaisons indicated that 52% of schools updated their FEPs throughout the school year. Of the

liaisons who made changes to their school’s FEP from the 2016-2017 school year to the 2017-2018 school year, only 24% indicated making some significant changes to their school’s FEP, and no liaison indicated the school made significant changes to the FEP. Furthermore, an assistant principal at another school described how they saw--not the FEP--but the SCIP as the school’s “living document” that the school refers to most often and puts some stock into (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

FEP Year-to-Year Scoring Table

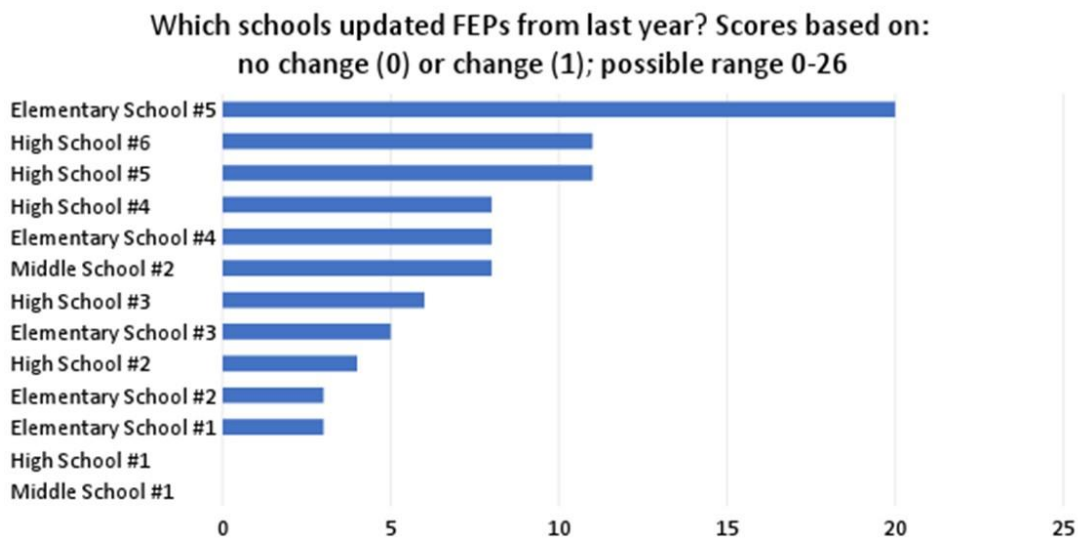


Figure 7: Comparison Analysis: Number of Updates from 2016-2017 FEP to 2017-2018 FEP

A side-by-side comparison of 13 schools’ 2016-2017 FEPs and 2017-2018 FEPs revealed three schools that made at least 10 significant changes year-to-year (and thus scored at least 10), which is illustrated in *Figure 7*. Two schools did not update the FEPs from the previous year’s version and scored 0¹⁹. Within the small sample, 31% of schools made minor changes and 15% made no changes from one year to the next. The comparison puts no value on the quality of the

¹⁹ Within the binary scoring system for the year-to-year comparison, a minor detail, such as an updating a contact person or date, did not warrant a score of 1 to indicate a “significant” change.

family engagement program itself, but simply measures the effort in developing the 2017-2018 plan. It may indicate, for example, the amount of school leadership and parent input utilized by the school to change the previous year's plan.

Considerations:

A designated school "leadership team" that includes some parents might take more ownership of the FEP, SCIP, and Compact development and update it more frequently with scheduled "check-ins" every quarter.

District-level support for staff development and coaching. Research by Zygmunt-Fillwalk (2006) suggests there is a lack of training in teaching programs about how to engage parents and families in support of student achievement, and an ongoing need for in-service and mentoring of teachers who have had training.²⁰ Other academic-based research promotes the use of reflective dialogue through learning communities, one-on-one coaching, and utilizing college professors in partnership.

A representative of the SPPS Title I Office also supports the idea of creating a district family engagement coaching position for schools:

In SPPS there is on the ground support and training in areas like literacy and math. There are literacy coaches and district reading instruction specialists that do this. There should be family engagement coaches for schools, from the district to individual schools. When we talk about the schools doing a "needs assessment" we think of reading, math, culture, and climate. There is a need to focus more attention on family engagement (personal communication November 7, 2017).

²⁰ Fewer than 50% of teaching programs even offer a course or prepare teachers for working with families and most of those are in early education training.

Part of the District Title I Plan should address coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist and build the capacity of all participating schools within the district in planning and implementing effective family engagement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance. 20 U.S.C. § 6601, Sec. 2103(b)(3)(E)(iii). Such coordination could be performed through district Title I funding, through Title II funding, or through community partnerships through Title IV. Such funds may be appropriate for establishing a coaching program for liaisons and other staff to support family engagement programming.

Other resources in support of training in family engagement include TERI, the University of Minnesota project redesigned teacher training to include partnership and family engagement, NNPS on-the-road trainings, MDE trainings, coaching, mentoring, and other robust and ongoing staff development.

Considerations:

Renew and broaden SPPS staff development focus to include a strong family engagement focus and course of study. It was apparent from the notation required on the FEP and board policy that equity trainings have been required and completed, or are in the process of being completed, in all buildings. There is an opportunity to expand this training with broader focus on family engagement and on creating a system-wide, strategic integration of learning and practices focused on student outcomes.

Making FEPs accessible and understandable. Both federal and state law make clear that when implementing the provisions of a District Title I Plan, FEPs, and the WBW Plan, to the extent practicable, family engagement efforts must be undertaken in a manner in which all parents can understand and in a language the parents within the district can understand. *See e.g.* 20 U.S.C. § 6312, Sec. 1112(e)(4); 20 U.S.C. §§ 6318, Sec. 1116(b)(1) and (e)(5); Minn. Stat. § 124D.8955(a).

In SPPS schools there are many attempts to address accessible language, including translated newsletters and interpreters at conferences and on phone calls home were all mentioned in interviews. At the DPAC meeting, a parent shared a complaint she made to her school, which

translates every other newsletter into Spanish. Some schools cannot get enough interpreters at school conferences, due to overlapping demand with other teachers and schools. In addition, interpreters are rarely at parent meetings, including PTA. One school began utilizing a “call-in” company that provided interpretation, which the principal reported to be more available and convenient than relying on the district and school staffing system (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

The barriers to greater inclusion are real and understandable; “easier said than done” was the common refrain to engaging all parents. One liaison described how long and boring it can feel as a parent to attend parent meetings, where multiple streams of asynchronous interpretation is offered (personal communication, November 15, 2017). Another liaison believes this is a necessary pill to swallow in bringing diverse parents together. Describing personal experience on committees at a large high school, this liaison was disappointed that interpreters rarely were present, expressing hope that Somali and Karen²¹ parents, who represent a growing proportion of families, would be more active. The school was advertising special parent nights in the newsletter catered specifically to these families, but it will take the entire community to improve the school (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Considerations:

Provide interpreters as often as possible so that all parents have an opportunity to understand what is happening at their school and to develop a greater understanding about the importance of their role of supporting learning in the classroom through involvement in the home.

Utilize the call-in center or other available interpreter services when local interpreters are in high demand and the school system option is exhausted.

Translate parent newsletters and other important documents used to inform parents in writing (such as the SCIP, FEP and Compact) in as many languages as is appropriate given

²¹ Minnesota is home to a relatively large Karen immigrant population. Originally from Southeast Asia, they speak a Sino-Tibetan language.

each individual school's population.

Make personal calls to parents (including all Subgroups as defined in law) to be involved in the various mandated committees to help them understand the need and importance of having a parent/family voice in the planning, participation and evaluation of family engagement plans or other areas such as curriculum, grant application as noted in this report.

Ensure the FEP is family friendly. In the liaison survey, the participants were asked, “If you could change one or two things about the FEP process, what would it be?” and several commented on its poor fit for parental input. One liaison indicated that the format of the FEP is “not terribly parent friendly,” which may help explain the way parents view it. One liaison may have summarized the issues for their peers:

I would simplify it—it is too oriented to compliance rather than focusing on actual school improvement ideas. If we were able to spend that time in developing the areas we want to focus on for the year, in concrete ways, it would be more useful (personal communication, October 24, 2017).

Another indicated it needs to be made “more valuable for parents,” while another suggested “getting more parents engaged” is the challenge (personal communication, October 24, 2017).

Improvements were also suggested by the Parent Engagers, the liaisons who indicated greater parent contributions to their FEPs in the survey. They were not content with the ease of use of the FEP process for parents and requested more parent-friendly and streamlined FEP guidance and processes. Regardless of how much liaisons indicated parents were engaged in the FEP process, they commented about the process not being parent-friendly. They requested specifically less jargon and compliance orientation.

Considerations:

The FEP Template could prompt schools to provide a one-page cover letter that indicates: 1) changes to their FEP this year; 2) parent contribution records; 3) explanation of FEP process, lessons learned and other pertinent information for families and staff.

Post the school FEP - perhaps a shortened, easy to comprehend version of it - on the school bulletin board and on the website to make the plan more visible, understandable and meaningful to parents and staff, alike. Consider translated versions to meet the needs of all families in the school.

Disallow jargon and acronyms on the FEP, and use hyperlinks to lead parents to research the many resources and programs referenced on FEPs.

Improve school websites with a unique search function. It is not possible to search a school website--the search box leads to a search of the entire district. This makes finding a Compact, for example, a challenge for a parent, who may come across unknown terms when navigating school content.

Barriers for parent inclusion. Barriers to attracting parents to FEP-related events cited by respondents included culture, time and energy restraints of busy parents, transportation, and lack of understanding. Liaisons recognized limitations for what a parent might contribute due to systemic barriers, including lack of familiarity and a history that has better served white families. If, for example, a liaison were to call a meeting to discuss how the school's communication materials are working for parents, only certain parents would patiently tolerate these types of review exercises, according to an experienced liaison (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Cultural aspects vary. To many, involvement in the child's school is unknown; their own parents were not involved in their education in ways discussed in this report. A perception for some is that the school is for the kids, not them. One liaison attributed poor minority representation to many minorities having poor experiences themselves at school (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Figure 8 adds another layer of complexity the school faces in implementation of policy intended to attract diverse parents. One liaison bluntly shared, it is mostly white people who show up to open invitations to parent committees (personal communication, November 15, 2017). However, questions arise when white parents contribute to FEPs, which seek to assist Title I parents, who disproportionately represent people of color.

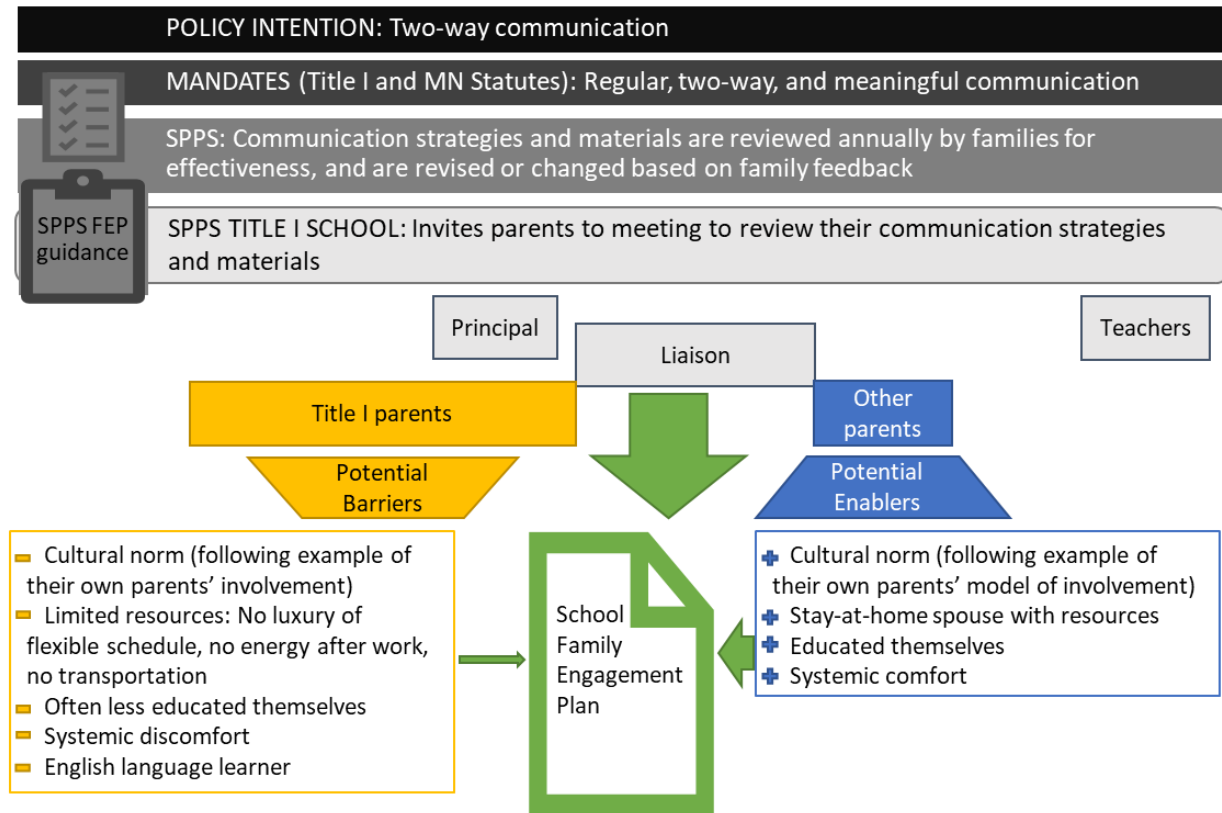


Figure 8: Policy Implementation Thread to Parent Level

By virtue of showing up to the committee or meeting to discuss the FEP, parents demonstrate a higher tendency to be engaged in two-way, meaningful communication with the school already. This leaves the school with a choice. If the school is meeting to discuss how communications strategies and materials can be improved, in order to engage parents who are less engaged in the ways discussed in this study, then what the school really seeks is input from the parents who do not engage in their child's school and education, especially Title I parents. These parents need to be drawn to the school's meaningful, two-way communication strategies and materials that do not seem to work for them. If other parents are more enabled to show up to the FEP meeting, as is represented in Figure 8, what more can the liaison do? Figure 8's wider green arrow corresponds with greater input coming from other parents in this scenario. In contrast, the smallest green contribution arrow is from Title I families, the ones for whom the programs are designed.

An MDE representative explained that even the socially-oriented events for parents are meant to get to “those five parents that were most hard to reach. Did you reduce the barriers?” The policy intention to be inclusive, especially of non-Caucasian, Title I parents, makes sense to one high school assistant principal, who did not hesitate to share frustration. The state and district can tell the school to get more parents [of color] involved in FEP processes, but no one has told them how to do it. Parents from diverse backgrounds “do not come.” The assistant principal repeated, “*How do you do it?*” (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

A liaison argued that busy parents cannot spend hours “wrapping their heads around a FEP” and questioned whether this was the best use of their time. The liaison has difficulty prioritizing requests for parents they do not see often to review a FEP over other types of more meaningful involvement, such as an event to learn how to engage in their child’s learning at home (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Finally, it should be noted that liaisons felt the more privileged, and often white, parents who showed up to the FEP meetings usually demonstrated racial sensitivity and awareness. They were not there to look out only for their own children. They seemed to understand that inclusive and equitable solutions would best serve the school (personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Success for broader inclusion. Respondents emphasized how much broader their net was cast for parent input through use of surveys. A liaison shared the following statement: “Parent survey works best at our school. At meetings, feedback is typical focused on families who are already highly involved because the parents attending are highly involved. The survey results in more diverse perspective.” This liaison indicated on the liaison survey that they reached over 50 parents to involve in the FEP process this way (personal communication, October 24, 2017).

It is convenient to rely on committees to receive parent input, and liaisons indicated gratitude to help them accomplish their work (personal communication, November 15, 2017). Through observation of part of a DPAC meeting, it was evident that SPPS organizes these well and identified committed parents. In a survey of active Latino parents, 60% knew of the PAC's potential to represent their idea to the school and district, and 60% see a PAC as a helpful parent program to improve academic outcomes for their children.

Considerations:

SPPS might consider encouraging FEP-level input by sharing some of the best survey and other practices from other schools. This could be done at an end of year gathering or organized by District level staff as a celebration of family engagement.

Pilot the use of the FEP Incremental Update System, which is described on the following page.

FEP INCREMENTAL UPDATE SYSTEM

Liaisons and other staff could be gathering feedback from families throughout the year and recording it, rather than relying on a committee or FEP meeting once a year.

During proactive interaction, a liaison said she reaches out to parents by phone or stops them in the hall, “Are you a parent here? I just want you to know who I am and what I do. How are things going for you this year?” (personal communication, November 15, 2017). At this point, the liaison will be intentional to proactively start a FEP-related conversation or use it as a conversation starter. To ensure the entire FEP is addressed during the year, the liaison could focus on a different FEP theme each week or month. For example, the liaison might choose school transitions in October when talking to the new families—asking how the transition went and getting specific about the programs, i.e. “Did you and your child take one of our tours last spring or this summer? How did that experience serve your needs?”

During reactive interaction, parents may raise a FEP-related issue in conversations with her or the liaison may hear about conversations with teachers. It would prompt the liaison to explain what the school does, and ask for feedback on the school’s strategy and practices.

At some point after proactive and reactive interaction, the liaison would return to her desk and record feedback—the mandated parental input—into the FEP Incremental Update System. It could be a shared effort on a Google document with others in the building.

The liaison could briefly summarize parent feedback on family engagement practices during a monthly staff meeting, create a report for the district and other liaisons, and add it to the parent newsletter. A district template, such as the one below, would provide documentation evidence for compliance. If pursued daily, the school would gain face-to-face input from dozens of targeted parents a month, rather than from the typical parents who join the committees.

#	Date	Parent name	FEP theme addressed	Parent feedback/input

Two SPSS programs that address the family engagement mandates. Research for this study touched on stakeholder impressions of two OFECP programs, Parent Academy and Parent Teacher Home Visit. They naturally came up as solutions to bridging the barriers and challenges

described thus far. Both stem from research-based policy that have been put into mandates. *Figure 9* provides an illustration for the Parent Teacher Home Visits program, policy to implementation.

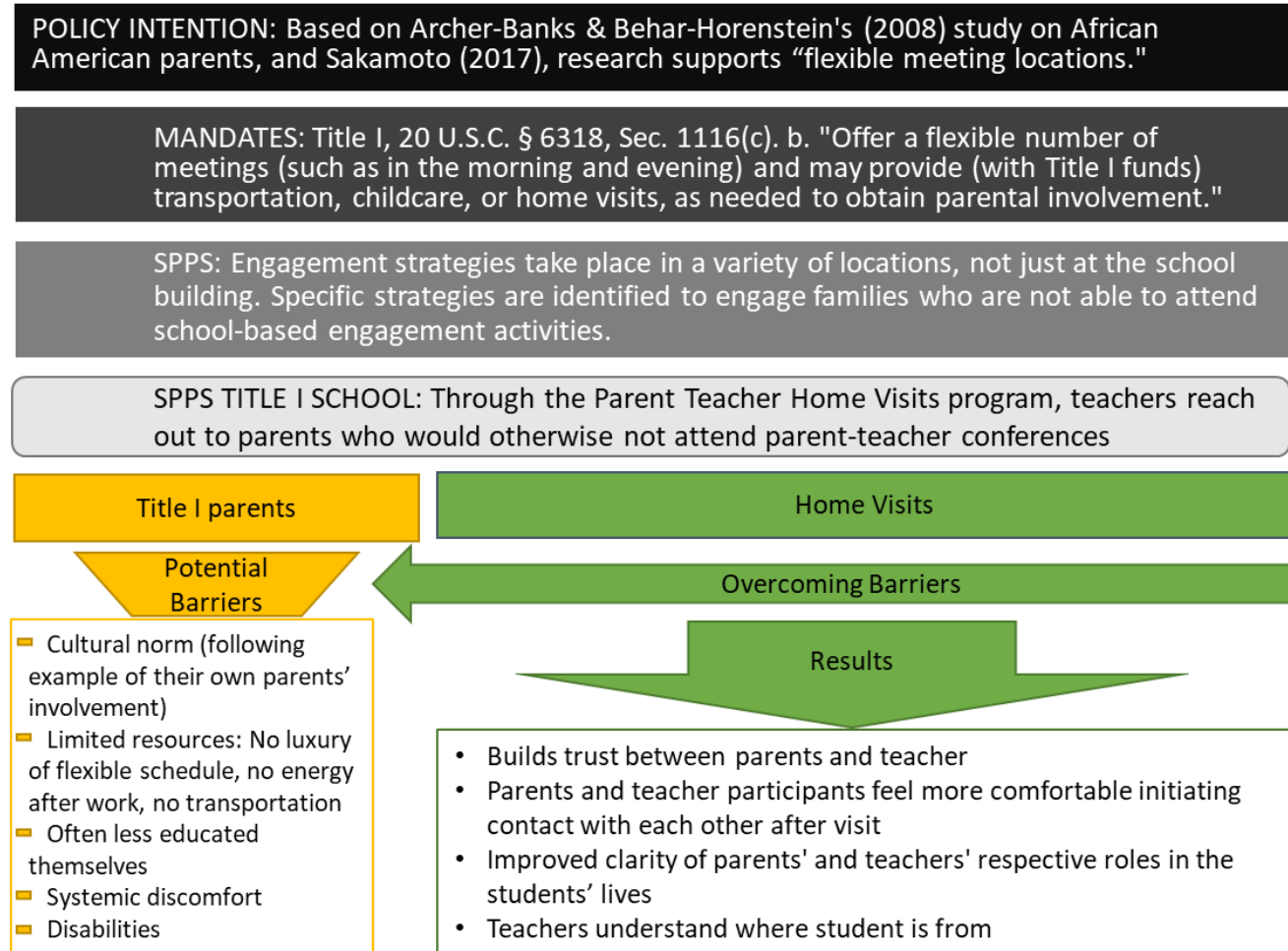


Figure 9: Parent Teacher Home Visits program, policy to implementation

Parent Teacher Home Visit program. The FEP template suggests "Engagement strategies take place in a variety of locations, not just at the school building. Specific strategies are identified to engage families who are not able to attend school-based engagement activities" (SPPS, 2017). Other than home visits, schools provided very little compliance with this suggestion.²² According to the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers Union (2017), the Parent Teacher Home Visit program has grown

²² This is another instance of where 21st Century Learning Centers could be mentioned.

from six trained teachers visiting 15 families to a total of more than 500 trained teachers and over 1,000 families since 2010, and interview respondents spoke favorably of the program.

Parent Teacher Home Visits can set expectations for parents to become partners. The Saint Paul Teachers Union published positive findings in the 2013-2014 evaluation they sponsored regarding the impact on teacher-family relationships. The connections formed during the visits between teachers and families demystified their respective roles in students' lives. Other research, such as Sheldon and Jung (2015), describes trust-building as a foundation for family engagement. They state that individual home visits reportedly break down barriers of understanding, because the teacher and family demonstrate an intention of getting to know one another in a setting that defines the parent and child and sets them at ease. The trust leads to more open communication between parents and teachers.

Parent Academy. Some perceived strengths and weaknesses of Parent Academy were raised in interviews and a survey. Some parents recognize the potential for Parent Academy. Through a survey, 90% of active Latino parents chose Parent Academy as a program the school and district do well to help Hispanic students perform better academically (November 8, 2017). One liaison described an event tailored for the Somali parents, which she said was well-coordinated with the district (November 15, 2017). Targeting specific populations, who are less familiar with the public education system and/or are new to the district, was discussed as necessary.

However, attracting parents to Parent Academy shared many of the barriers to engaging parents in the FEP. A liaison described how parents of kindergartners and first-graders are more likely to attend, and thereafter, the parents feel they have already seen the events and know what is going on (November 15, 2017). One principal explained with some passion the school's fruitless

efforts to attract parents to Parent Academy seminars, wondering if the money could be better spent to design and administer her own events (November 15, 2017).

It was not clear at which stage parents were being asked to contribute to Parent Academy offerings, other than liaisons sharing with committees the list of possible events to choose from. Epstein & Van Voorhis (2010) emphasize the importance of teamwork in developing the family engagement partnership program in middle and high schools. They particularly emphasize the importance of topic selection. One interviewee specifically suggested the solution proposed by Epstein and Van Voorhis. Schools should be allowed to determine Parent Academy topics most relevant for themselves, which would increase ownership of the program, resources, and topics (personal communication, November 15, 2017). They suggest SPPS could go beyond offering one of eight topics, and let schools drive up their attendance with ownership. Research by Griffin & Steen (2010) suggests that increased collaboration can increase attendance at events.

Considerations:

Parent Academy could be offered regionally to cover several schools at once to improve efficiency and reduce the burden for schools to fill seminar seats.

If feasible, schools might be given more independence in designing parent education for their schools than the Parent Academy offers. In addition to the district providing affinity groups, DPAC support, and SA/Seminar content, SPPS could consider increasing site-specific decision-making and increasing site allocation of funds.

Conclusion

The recommendations made by the principal to give them a greater voice in choosing parent education content echo what the academic research says should be done and have broader implications for the district and a collective, strategic pursuit of families. Figure 10 completes a limited picture of opportunities facing SPPS, though it is far from comprehensive in recognizing the challenges.

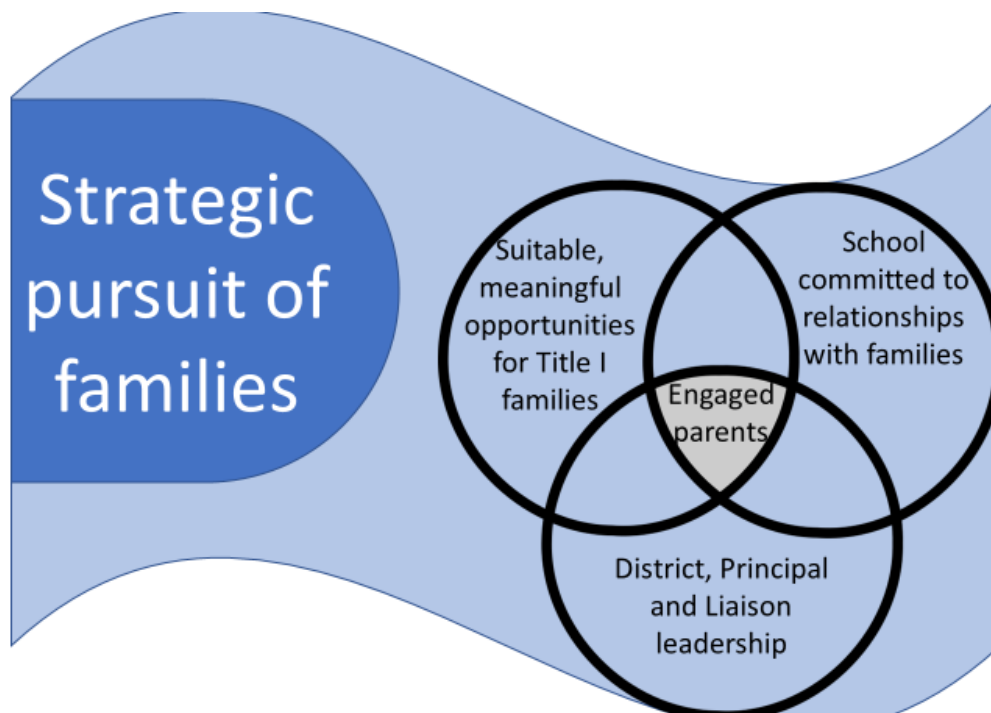


Figure 10: Led by strategy, a union of leadership, staff, and opportunities to engage parents

District and school leadership have been found to influence the quality of family engagement programs when their focus is a support role, rather than compliance monitoring (Epstein, Galindo, & Sheldon, 2011). With the labyrinth of mandates and policies, compliance can overtake focus in engaging families to improve academic outcomes, as Figure 11 illustrates.

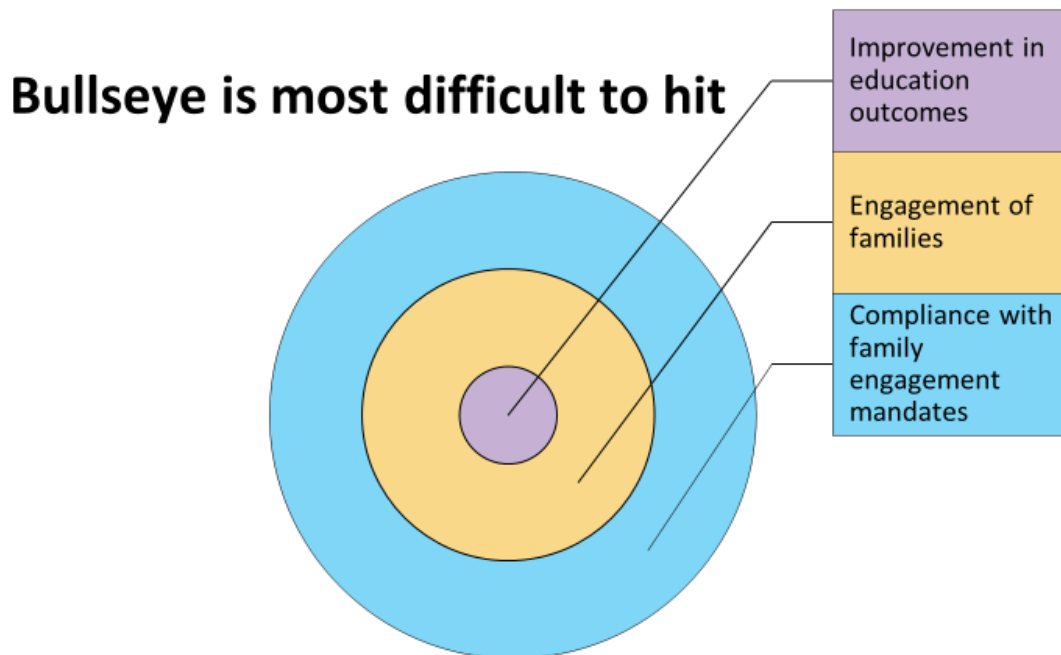


Figure 11: Aiming for the target of improved academic outcomes

Stakeholders across the broad education spectrum rarely seem to share the same space to understand one another. The disparate spaces were evident in reviewing legislation; policy makers likely wrote bits and pieces of academic research into law in various places and times without knowledge of existing laws or considering all stakeholders. No evident logic model connected policy all the way to Title I parents' ability to support their child's learning. A hypothetical logic model would range wide with stakeholders in separate, isolated spaces (or boxes in a logic model): the government compliance office, district family engagement office, school administration, parent liaison, teachers, parents, and students.

In addition to emphasizing the role of a strong principal to provide the support to the liaisons, teachers and families, Epstein, Galindo and Sheldon (2011) hold up the district as a potential beacon for schools. Epstein, Galindo and Sheldon provide examples of districts hosting end-of-year celebrations, where family engagement best practices and successes are shared between schools.

This type of leadership provides the vision for others in the logic model chain to grow more successful family (and community) engagement partnerships.

Shared strategic purpose unifies leadership, staff and programs in Figure 10. SPPS and its schools demonstrate strategic purpose and pursuits already, but there are opportunities for more reflection. The FEP is not serving as the meaningful, strategic planning process that meaningfully brings each circle together.

Limitations

Any study of the education system is limited by the sheer volume of data available. It is unlikely a study can comprehensively cover any topic that addresses what happens in schools each day. There is always another story or data point or additional interpretation. The study primarily took place in a span of only 2.5 months, which limited the depth and analysis.

Adding to research challenges, overlapping mandates are not always written with practicable foresight and the clearest intentions. The legal overview provided is not intended in any way to be considered either comprehensive or indicative of all federal and state mandates but rather is intended to provide a broad overview of some of the primary areas of the law involving family engagement.

Other limitations to this study included lack of access to some of the documentation, especially FEPs. The schools that did not submit and comply to a weeks-past deadline may need the closest examination of all. The FEP is further limited in its current form to say too much about the true values, practices, and strategies of schools.

Teachers and parents are at the center of family engagement, and only a handful of parents were contacted. Teachers were not included in the scope of the study, and that limited the overall picture of what may be occurring in practice. There was limited contact with district level OFECP staff due primarily to time limitations. The principals, assistant principals, liaisons and involved parents interviewed and surveyed do not represent the full breadth and depth of feelings and experiences of all persons impacted by SPPS family engagement efforts. Small interview size and limited survey sample size of parents and liaisons might also lead to less expansive opinions and limit generalizations, although the similarity in response of the individual interviews did help assure similarity in content and concerns by these groups.

The surveys of liaisons and parents were handed out in meetings administered by district staff on behalf of the research team. Anonymous surveys were intended to let respondents speak freely, but follow-up face-to-face would have made it a richer experience.

Finally, the researchers themselves brought a variety of experiences, including legislative, legal, and SPPS parent roles, which served the collective effort well, but the group did not represent many of the stakeholders on personal levels. No one is from a Title I family, for example.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations are suggested for future study:

1. *Study the impact of the liaison position.* With schools deciding whether or how to fund liaisons and providing a wide variety of job descriptions for them, it is worth examining the impact liaisons make in schools. As part of the study, examine the absence of liaisons in relation to outcomes and shifting responsibilities to other staff. One principal, who uses the liaison position at her school to focus primarily on discipline issues, suggested 5% of the principal's time was doing the work of a liaison, including the FEP.
2. *Is there a relationship between good FEP process and outcomes?* Identify and examine use of possible indicators that link academic improvement to FEPs, SCIPs, and Compacts; pilot tracking these indicators at a handful of schools; and seek to understand which use of time and resources make the most sense.
3. As a possible continuation to suggestion above, study *accountability systems for documents, such as the FEPs.* Chad Aldeman from Bellwether Education Partners recommended Massachusetts and New York as the best models for defining the relationship between plan writing and accountability (personal communication, October 8, 2017). There, standardized processes are linked to a required rubric, external experts, and state-level accountability for outcomes. If schools continue to struggle over time, the state chooses from interventions at the schools. A description of New York's process: www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/diagnostic-tool-institute/DTSDEFAQs.html#surveys.
4. Come up with *solutions to meaningfully engage Title I parents* (especially the parents who do not participate now). First, design research to understand the parents themselves in a way

that will lead to constructive, creative solutions to gaining their input. Second, consider a best practices review. Has anyone in the country figured out practices that could be piloted?

5. *Seek to understand the role and impact of white families.* Two liaisons were asked directly whether the white parents, whom they reported showed up in greater numbers, could represent the views and needs of minorities who did not show up to FEP meetings (see discussion on Fig. 7). The liaisons believed the white parents were sensitive to race and tried to find equitable solutions, but questions remain about that role. What training could be provided? What are better alternatives?
6. Further study into the University of Minnesota's TERI initiative and outcomes might be useful, but this research only became known to our research team late in our research study.

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Appendix A: Legal Overview of Federal and State Mandates Relating to Family Engagement²³

I. TITLE I

The stated purpose of Title I of ESEA is to “provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.” 20 U.S.C. § 6301, Sec. 1001.²⁴ Title I is meant to concentrate on a “subgroup of students” to include: (1) economically disadvantaged students; (2) students from major racial and ethnic groups; (3) children with disabilities; and (4) English learners (individually Subgroup and collectively Subgroups). 20 U.S.C. § 6311, Sec. 1111(c)(2).

A. District Title I Plan.

1. Generally.

Under ESEA, each school district in Minnesota receiving Title I funding is required to develop a plan (District Title I Plan) to ensure that the express purpose of Title I is implemented, specifically to ensure that all children receive a high-quality education, and to close the achievement gap between children meeting the challenging State academic standards and those children who are not meeting such standards. 20 U.S.C. § 6312, Sec. 1112(b). The District Title I Plan must be developed together with timely and meaningful consultation with the following stakeholders: (a) teachers; (b) principals; (c) other school leaders; (d) administrators; (e) other appropriate school personnel; and (f) parents of children in schools served under Title I. 20 U.S.C. § 6312, Sec. 1112(a). As appropriate, each of its policies and strategies must be

²³ This legal overview is not intended in any way to be considered either comprehensive or indicative of all federal and state mandates but rather is intended to provide a broad overview of some of the primary areas of the law involving family engagement.

²⁴ ESEA is implemented at the state, district and school levels. For purposes of this report, discussion will relate to the district and school levels only. For example, Title IV, Part E addresses family engagement in education programs that are statewide and, accordingly, not discussed herein. See 20 U.S.C. § 7241, *et seq.*

coordinated with other programs within ESEA, to expressly include IDEA as defined herein. 20 U.S.C. § 6312, Sec. 1112(a)(1)(B).

2. Family Engagement Policy.

Of import to the present report, the District Title I Plan must include the policy and strategy the district will use to implement effective parent and family engagement. 20 U.S.C. § 6312, Sec. 1112(b)(7); 20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(a)(2). A district can only receive Title I funds if it conducts outreach to all parents and family members and implements programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents and family members in programs developed under its District Title I Plan and each school's FEP. These programs, activities, and procedures must be planned and implemented with "meaningful consultation with parents of participating children." 20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(a)(1).

A policy for meaningful parent and family involvement must be in writing, incorporated into its District Title I Plan, and describe how it will undertake the following:

- a. Involve parents and family members in jointly developing the District Title I Plan and the SCIPs for each school;
- b. Provide the coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist and build the capacity of all participating schools within the district in planning and implementing effective parent and family involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance, which may include consultation with employers, business leaders, and philanthropic organizations or individuals with expertise in effectively engaging parents and family members in education;
- c. Coordinate and integrate parent and family engagement strategies throughout ESEA with other relevant Federal, State and local laws and programs;
- d. Conduct, with the meaningful involvement of parents and family members, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parent and family engagement policy, to specifically include identifying barriers to greater participation by parents in activities authorized under the District Title I Plan (with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any

racial or ethnic minority background), identifying the needs of parents and family member to assist with the learning of their children, and its strategies to support successful school and family interactions;

- e. Use the findings of such evaluation to design evidence-based strategies for more effective parental involvement and to revise, if necessary, the parent and family engagement policies described in the school FEPs;
- f. Involve parents in the activities of the schools in the district, which may include establishing a parent advisory board comprised of a sufficient number and representative group of parents or family members served by the district to adequately represent the needs of the population served for purposes of developing, revising and reviewing the parent and family engagement policy.

20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(a)(2).

3. Notification of Parents.

Annually at the beginning of each school year, a district must notify parents of each school receiving Title I funds that they may request information regarding the professional qualifications of their teachers, student assessments, and language instruction. 20 U.S.C. § 6312, Sec.1112(e)(1). Importantly, a district must inform parents of how they can be involved in the education of their children, and be active participants in assisting their children in such endeavors as attaining English proficiency, achieving at a high level within a well-rounded education, and meeting the challenging State academic standards expected of all students. 20 U.S.C. § 6312, Sec. 1112(e)(2)(C). Information must be conveyed in a manner in which all parents can understand, in a uniform format, and be provided in a language the parents within the district can understand. 20 U.S.C. § 6312, Sec. 1112(e)(4).

B. Family Engagement Plans.

Each school receiving Title I funds must, together with parents and family members of participating children, develop a written parent and family engagement policy, agreed on by such parents, that must describe the means for carrying out the requirements described below (FEP).

20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(b)(1). The FEP must then be distributed to all parents within the school in a uniform format, and in a language the parents within the school can understand. *Id.*

1. Policy Involvement.

First, the FEP must describe how it will carry out the following required actions:

- a. Convene an annual meeting, at a convenient time, to which all parents of the school shall be invited and encouraged to attend, to inform parents of their school's participation under Title I and to explain its requirements, and the right of all parents to be involved.
- b. Offer a flexible number of meetings (such as in the morning and evening) and may provide (with Title I funds) transportation, childcare, or home visits, as needed to obtain parental involvement.
- c. Involve parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning, review, and improvement of Title I programs, including the planning, review, and improvement of the school FEP.
- d. Provide parents with the following information: (i) timely information about Title I programs; (ii) a description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the achievement levels of the challenging State academic standards; and (iii) if requested by parents, opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children, while responding to any such suggestions as soon as practicably possible.

20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(c).

2. School-Parent Compacts.

Second, as part of its FEP, each school must develop, jointly with parents, a school-parent Compact that outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State's high standards. Specifically, the school-parent compact must include:

- a. A description of:
 - (i) the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the children to meet the challenging State academic standards; and
 - (ii) the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children's learning.
- b. A statement addressing the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis and describing how that will be achieved in their school. Minimum standards by which such communication can be achieved are:
 - (i) parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, at least annually;
 - (ii) frequent reports to parents on their child's achievement;
 - (iii) reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observation of classroom activities; and
 - (iv) ensuring regular two-way meaningful communication between family members and school staff, and, to the extent practicable, in a language that family members can understand.

20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(d).

3. Building Capacity for Involvement.

In addition to mandates set forth above, districts and schools are jointly responsible for and required to describe how it will undertake each of the following when implementing all Title I mandates as part of its FEP:

- a. Provide assistance to parents in understanding such topics as the challenging State academic standards, State and local academic assessments, requirements under Section 1116, and how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children.
- b. Provide materials and training to help parents to work with their children to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy training and using technology, to foster parental involvement.
- c. Educate teachers, special instructional support personnel, principals, other school leaders, and other staff, with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of

contributions of parents, and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, how to implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and the school.

- d. To the extent feasible, coordinate and integrate parent involvement programs and activities with other Federal, State, and local programs.
- e. Ensure that information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is sent to the parents of participating children in a format and in a language that parents can understand.
- f. Provide such other reasonable support for parental involvement activities under Title I as parents may request.

Districts and schools may also (but are not required), do the following as part of its FEPs:

- a. Involve parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other educators to improve the effectiveness of such training.
- b. Provide necessary literacy training from funds received under Section 1116 if the district has exhausted all other reasonable available sources of funding for such training.
- c. Pay reasonable and necessary expenses associated with local parental involvement activities, such as transportation and child care costs, to enable parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions.
- d. Train parents to enhance the involvement of other parents.
- e. Arrange school meetings at a variety of times, or conduct in-home conferences between teachers or other educators, who work directly with participating children, with parents who are unable to attend such conferences at school, in order to maximize parental involvement and participation.
- f. Adopt and implement model approaches to improving parental involvement.
- g. Establish a district-wide advisory council to provide advice on all matters related to parental involvement in programs supported under Title I.
- h. Develop appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses in parent involvement activities.

4. Accessibility.

Finally, districts and its schools must provide opportunities for the informed participation of parent and family members in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language parents will understand. 20 U.S.C. § 6318, Sec. 1116(f).

C. Comprehensive Support and Improvement Plan.

Under ESEA, each district must, for each school identified by the State, and in partnership with stakeholders (including principals and other school leaders, teachers, and parents), locally develop and implement a comprehensive support and improvement plan (Improvement Plan) for the school to improve student outcomes that annually measure, for all students and separately for each Subgroup, academic achievement (as identified by the State and based on qualifications for elementary, secondary and high schools), together with not less than one indicator of school quality or student success that can include such measures as student engagement, educator engagement, student access to and completion of advanced coursework, postsecondary readiness, school climate and safety, or any other indicator identified by the State. 20 U.S.C. § 6311, Sec. 1111(d)(1)(B).²⁵

II. MINNESOTA'S WORLD'S BEST WORKFORCE.

In relation to the District Title I Plan and SCIPs required by Title I, Minnesota has enacted a policy intended to strive for the world's best workforce, which is defined as: (1) meeting school readiness goals; (2) having all third grade students achieve grade-level literacy; (3) closing the academic achievement gap among all racial and ethnic groups of students and between students living in poverty and students not living in poverty; (4) having all students

²⁵ Minnesota has codified its indicators at Minn. Stat. §120B.11, *et seq.*, as further discussed in Section II below.

attain career and college readiness before graduating from high school; and (5) having all students graduate from high school. Minn. Stat. § 120B.11, subd. 1(c).

At the district level, a school board is required, at a public meeting, to adopt a comprehensive, long-term strategic plan to support and improve teaching and learning that is aligned with creating the world's best workforce (WBW Plan). Minn. Stat. § 120B.11, subd. 2.

The WBW Plan must summarily include:

1. Clearly defined district and school site goals and benchmarks for instruction and student achievement for all Subgroups²⁶;
2. A process to assess and evaluate each student's progress toward meeting state and local academic standards;
3. A system to periodically review and evaluate the effectiveness of all instruction and curriculum, taking into account strategies and best practices and student outcomes;
4. Strategies for improving instruction, curriculum, and student achievement, including the English and, where practicable, the native language development and the academic achievement of English learners;
5. A process to examine the equitable distribution of teachers and strategies to ensure low-income and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, ineffective, or out-of-field teachers;
6. Education effectiveness practices that integrate high-quality instruction, rigorous curriculum, technology, and a collaborative professional culture that develops and supports teacher quality, performance, and effectiveness; and
7. An annual budget for continuing to implement the district WBW Plan.

Minn. Stat. § 120B.11, subd. 2.

²⁶ Minnesota expands upon the federal definition of Subgroup as set forth herein, and adds the following: Karen community, seven of the most populous Asian and Pacific Island groups, 3 of the most populous Native groups, 7 of the most populous Hispanic/Latino groups, and 5 of the most populous Black and African heritage groups as determined by the total Minnesota population based on the most recent American Community Survey; home language; free or reduced-price lunch; and all students enrolled in a Minnesota public school who are currently or were previously in foster care Minn. Stat. § 120B.35(a)(2).

The school board must, as part of its development of a WBW Plan, establish an advisory committee to ensure active community participation in all phases of planning and improving the instruction and curriculum affecting state and district academic standards. The district advisory committee, to the extent possible, must reflect the diversity of the district and its school sites, include teachers, parents, support staff, students, and other community residents, to include providing translation to the extent appropriate. Parents and other community residents must comprise at least two-thirds of advisory committee members whenever possible. Minn. Stat. § 120B.11, subd. 3.

Each school must establish a site team to develop and implement strategies and education effectiveness practices to improve instruction, curriculum, cultural competencies, and student achievement at the school site, consistent with the district's WBW Plan. The site team must include an equal number of teachers and administrators and at least one parent. Minn. Stat. § 120B.11, subd. 4. The site team creates a curriculum improvement plan to align curriculum, assessment of student progress, and growth in meeting state and district academic standards and instruction. *Id.*

III. ACHIEVEMENT AND INTEGRATION PROGRAM.

The Achievement and Integration Program for Minnesota (AIPM) was established to pursue racial and economic integration and increase student academic achievement, create equitable educational opportunities, and reduce academic disparities. Minn. Stat. § 124D.861, subd. 1(a). SPPS is an eligible district required to incorporate AIPM into its WBW Plan. In relevant part, the AIPM may include family engagement initiatives that involve families in their students' academic life and success. Minn. Stat. § 124D.861, subd. 2.

IV. MINNESOTA'S PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT POLICY.

School boards within each district are encouraged, but not required, to formally adopt and implement a parent and family involvement policy (PFIP) that promotes and supports:

1. Oral and written communication between home and school that is regular, two-way, meaningful, and in families' native language;
2. Parenting skills;
3. Parents and caregivers who play an integral role in assisting student learning and learn about fostering students' academic success and learning at home and school;
4. Welcoming parents in the school and using networks that support families' cultural connections, seeking their support and assistance;
5. Partnerships with parents in the decisions that affect children and families in the schools; and
6. Providing community resources to strengthen schools, families, and student learning, including establishing a safe and supportive school climate by developing and implementing prevention and intervention programs on prohibited conduct.

Minn. Stat. § 124D.8955(a). As SPPS has implemented a PFIP²⁷, it is required to convene an advisory committee composed of an equal number of resident parents (who are not district employees) and school staff to make recommendations to the school board on developing and evaluating its PFIP. The advisory committee must consider the district's demographic diversity and barriers to parent involvement when developing its recommendations. Minn. Stat. § 124D.8955(b). The committee must also recommend to the school board and district or school how programs serving children can collaborate on the following: (1) understanding child development; (2) encouraging healthy communication between parents and children; (3) managing students' behavior through positive reinforcement; (4) establishing expectations for

²⁷ See SPPS Policy Manual, Policy No 615.00. Family Involvement.

student behavior; (5) providing media and Internet limits and supervision; and (6) promoting resilience and reducing risks for children. *Id.* In making its recommendations, the advisory committee must consider research-based best practices when implementing the PFIP. Minn. Stat. § 124D.8955(c).

V. OTHER SOURCES OF DISTRICT FUNDING FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES.

A. Title II

The stated purpose of Title II of ESEA is to provide grants to State educational agencies and subgrants to districts to: (1) increase student achievement consistent with the challenging State academic standards; (2) improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school leaders; (3) increase the number of teachers, principals, and other school leaders; and (4) provide low-income and minority students greater access to effective teachers, principals, and other school leaders. 20 U.S.C. § 6601, Sec. 2001.

1. District Applications.

A State receiving an allotment under Title II is required to award subgrants to districts upon submission of an application to the State. 20 U.S.C. § 6601, Sec. 2102(a)(1). For any application submitted by a district for Title II funds, it must meaningfully consult with and seek advice from teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals (including organizations representing such individuals), specialized instructional support personnel, charter school leaders, *parents*, community partners, and other organizations or partners with relevant and demonstrated expertise in programs and activities designed to meet the purpose of Title II and how best to improve the district's activities to meet the purpose of Title II. 20 U.S.C. § 6601, Sec. 2102(b)(3); 2101(d)(3)(emphasis added). The district application must include:

- a. A description of the activities to be carried out by the district and how these activities will be aligned with challenging State academic standards;
- b. A description of the district's systems of professional growth and improvement, such as induction for teachers, principals, or other school leaders and opportunities for building the capacity of teachers and opportunities to develop meaningful teacher leadership;
- c. A description of how the district will prioritize funds to schools served by the US Department of Education that are implementing comprehensive support and improvement activities and target support and improvement activities under its Improvement Plan²⁸ and have the highest percentage of children counted under Title I²⁹;
- d. A description of how the district will use data and ongoing consultation to continually update and improve activities hereunder; and
- e. An assurance that the district will coordinate professional development activities authorized.

20 U.S.C. § 6601, Sec. 2102(b)(2).

2. **How Title II Funds May be Used in Relation to Family Engagement.**³⁰

One of the programs and activities districts may undertake with a Title II subgrant is to provide high-quality, personalized professional development that is evidence-based, for teachers, instructional leadership principals, or other school leaders, that includes supporting efforts as to how to effectively engage parents, families, and community partners, and coordinate services between schools and communities. 20 U.S.C. § 6601, Sec. 2103(b)(3)(E)(iii).

In addition, the United States Secretary of Education must also award grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible districts for developing or implementing programs for recruiting, developing, and placing school leaders to improve schools implementing comprehensive support and improvement activities and targeted support and improvement activities under its

²⁸ See generally, 20 U.S.C. § 6311, Sec. 1111(d), *et seq.*

²⁹ See generally, 20 U.S.C. § 6336, Sec. 1124(c).

³⁰ There are myriad ways in which Title II funds may be used by districts that receive subgrants from the State; however, for purposes of this report we are focusing only on those that involve family engagement.

Improvement Plans³¹, including through cohort-based activities that build effective instructional and school leadership teams and develop a school culture, design, instructional program, and professional development program focused on student learning. 20 U.S.C. § 6673, Sec. 2243(a)(3). Arguably, such activities can and should include those to bolster family engagement practices.

B. Title III

The stated purpose of Title III is to:

1. help ensure that English learners³² attain English proficiency, and develop high levels of academic achievement in English;
2. to assist all English learners to achieve at high levels in the academic subjects so that all English learners can meet the same challenging State academic standards as that all children are expected to meet;
3. to assist teachers, principals, and other school leaders, State educational agencies, districts, and schools in establishing, implementing, and sustaining effective language instruction educational programs designed to assist in teaching English learners;
4. to assist teachers, principals, and other school leaders, State educational agencies, and districts to develop and enhance their capacity to provide effective instructional programs designed to prepare English learners to enter all-English instructional settings; and
5. promote parental, family, and community participation in language instruction educational programs for the parents, families, and communities of English learners.

20 U.S.C. § 6812, Sec. 3102.

A district receiving a State subgrant of Title III funds must use those funds, in relevant part, in order to provide and implement effective activities and strategies that enhance or supplement language instruction educational programs for English learners, which *must* include

³¹ See generally, 20 U.S.C. § 6311, Sec. 1111(d), *et seq.*

³² Throughout Title III, English learners expressly include immigrant children and youth.

parent, family, and community engagement activities, and *may* include strategies that serve to coordinate and align related programs. 20 U.S.C. § 6825, Sec. 3115(c)(3)(emphasis added).³³

Other authorized activities of a district receiving Title III funds include providing community participation programs, family literacy services, and parent and family outreach and training activities to English learners and their families to improve the English language skills of English learners, and to assist parent and families in helping their children to improve their academic achievement and becoming active participants in the education of their children. 20 U.S.C. § 6825, Sec. 3115(d)(6).³⁴

In submitting its application to a State for a subgrant under Title III, a district must submit a plan that includes, in relevant part, an assurance that the district has consulted with teachers, researchers, school administrators, *parents, family members*, community members, public or private entities, and institutions of higher education, in developing and implementing its plan. 20 U.S.C. § 6826, Sec. 3116(b)(4)(C).

In addition, the US Secretary of Education must use its Title III funds to award grants, on a competitive basis, to institutions of higher education (or public or private entities with relevant experience) and in consortia with State educational agencies or districts, to provide for professional development activities that will improve classroom instruction for English learners and assist educational personnel working with English learners to meet high professional standards to support strategies that strengthen and increase parent, family, and community member engagement in the education of English learners. 20 U.S.C. § 6861, Sec. 3131(3).

³³ Other required activities of a district receiving a State subgrant can be found at 20 U.S.C. § 6825, Sec. 3115 *et seq.*

³⁴ Other authorized activities of a district receiving State Title III funds are found at 20 U.S.C. § 6825, Sec. 3115(d) *et seq.*

C. **Title IV**

1. **Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants.**

The purpose of Title IV, Part A, is to improve students' academic achievement by increasing the capacity of States, districts, schools, and local communities to: (1) provide all students with access to a well-rounded education; (2) improve school conditions for student learning; and (3) improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students. 20 U.S.C. § 7111, Sec. 4101. Districts are eligible to receive an allocation from State Title IV funding by submitting an application that is developed through consultation with *parents*, teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, students, community-based organizations, local government representatives, Indian tribe or tribal organizations that may be located in the region served by the district (where applicable), charter school teachers, principals, and other school leaders, and others with relevant and demonstrated expertise in programs and activities designed to meet the purpose of student support and academic enrichment. 20 U.S.C. § 7116, Sec. 4106(c)(1). The district is required to engage in continued consultation with these entities in order to meet its stated purpose and coordinate such implementation with other related strategies, programs, and activities being conducted in the community. 20 U.S.C. § 7116, Sec. 4106(c)(2).

A portion of any funds received by the district *must* be used to develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive programs and activities that promote the involvement of parents in the activity or program, and *may* include programs or activities that establish learning environments and enhance students' effective learning skills that are essential for school readiness and academic success, such as by providing integrated systems of student and family supports. 20 U.S.C. § 7118, Sec. 4108(3) and (5)(C)(vii).

2. **21st Century Learning Centers.**

The purpose of Title IV, Part B, is to provide opportunities for communities to establish or expand activities in community learning centers that, in relevant part, offer families of students served by community learning centers opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children's education, including opportunities for literacy and related education development. 20 U.S.C. § 7171, Sec. 4201(a)(3) and (b)(1)(B). Districts can receive subgrants from State allocations under Part B of Title IV to carry out a broad array of activities that advance student academic achievement and support student success, to include in relevant part, parenting skills programs that promote parental involvement and family literacy. 20 U.S.C. § 7175, Sec. 4205(a)(10).

D. Title VI.

The purpose of Title VI is to support the efforts of local educational agencies, Indian tribes and organizations, postsecondary institutions, and other entities to:

1. meet the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of Indian student, so that such students can meet the challenging State academic standards;
2. ensure that Indian students gain knowledge and understanding of Native communities, language, tribal histories, traditions, and cultures; and
3. ensure that teachers, principals, other school leaders, and other staff who serve Indian students have the ability to provide culturally appropriate and effective instruction and supports to such students.

20 U.S.C. § 7402, Sec. 6102.

Districts are supported in their efforts under to develop elementary and secondary school programs for Indian students that are designed to meet the stated purpose of this Title VI by

applying to the US Secretary of Education. 20 U.S.C. § 7424, Sec. 6114(a).³⁵ Any program for which assistance is sought must have been developed in open consultation with parents of Indian children and teachers, teachers in the schools, representatives of Indian tribes on Indian lands located within 50 miles of any school that the district will serve if such tribes have any children in such school, Indian organizations and, if appropriate, Indian students from secondary schools, including through public hearings held by the district to provide to the individuals described herein a full opportunity to understand the program and to offer recommendations regarding the program. 20 U.S.C. § 7424, Sec. 6114(c)(3)(C) and (c)(4).

A district receiving a grant under Title VI *must* use it for services and activities that: (1) carry out the program set forth in its application; (2) are designed to be responsive to the language and cultural needs of the Indian students; and (3) supplement and enrich the regular school program of the district. 20 U.S.C. § 7425, Sec. 6115(a). Such services and activities *may* include integrated educational services in combination with other programs that meet the needs of Indian children and their families, including programs that promote parental involvement in school activities and increase student achievement. 20 U.S.C. § 7425, Sec. 6115(b)(5). A district may also use its funds received under this Title VI to support a schoolwide program if the committee approves the use of the funds for the schoolwide program, the schoolwide program is consistent with the purposes of Title VI, and the district identifies in its application how the use of such funds in a schoolwide program will product benefits to Indian students that would not be achieved if the funds were not used in a schoolwide program. 20 U.S.C. § 7425, Sec. 6115(c).

³⁵ Grants under Title VI may also be awarded to Indian tribes, Indian organizations and Indian community-based organizations, all as further defined in ESEA and which are not the subject of this report. *See generally* 20 U.S.C. § 7422, Sec. 6112(a) and § 7424, Sec. 6114.

E. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA) AND PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS IN MINNESOTA.

1. IDEA

An express finding of Congress in its enactment of IDEA was that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home. 20 U.S.C. § 1400(c)(5)(B). Children are also well served by coordinating IDEA with other district, State, and Federal school improvement efforts, to include ESEA, in order to ensure children benefit from such efforts and that special education can become a service for children. 20 U.S.C. § 1400(c)(5)(C). Funds received by districts may expressly be used to carry out activities authorized under ESEA. 20 U.S.C. § 1413(a)(2)(C)(ii).³⁶

2. Parent Advisory Councils

In order to increase the involvement of parents of children with disabilities in district policy making and decision making, each school district must have a special education advisory council that is incorporated into the district's special education system plan. This advisory council may be established in cooperation with other districts that are members of the same special education cooperative; may be established as a subgroup of an existing board council or committee; half of its members must be parents of students with a disability; and must meet no less than once each year. Minn. Stat. § 125A.24.

³⁶ Coordination of IDEA with other title programs under ESEA is often required and vast in its reach and, therefore, deserves its own analysis which is outside the scope of this report.

Appendix B: One-Page Overview of Mandates

School's Responsibility to Engage Parents

Plan with Parents

- Write and agree on FEP with parents.
- Create access and opportunities: Make it easy for all families to participate and be involved.
- Create school compact that defines a roadmap for state academic standards, including:
 - Curriculum overview
 - Parental responsibilities
 - Two-way communication plan
- Develop SCIP to include parents, measuring academic achievement, combined with one additional indicator of school quality or student success
- Coordinate parental involvement programs that best fit your needs

Inform Parents

- Parents need notifications in appropriate format and language
- Inform and provide your family's material to improve achievement levels

Seek Parents' Input and Feedback

- Establish a site team to include parents to incorporate the district's World's Best Workforce Plan. Sample topics to discuss:
 - Developing strategies to improve instruction, curriculum, cultural competencies, and student achievement
 - Creating a curriculum improvement plan to align curriculum, progress assessment and growth

Educate Parents

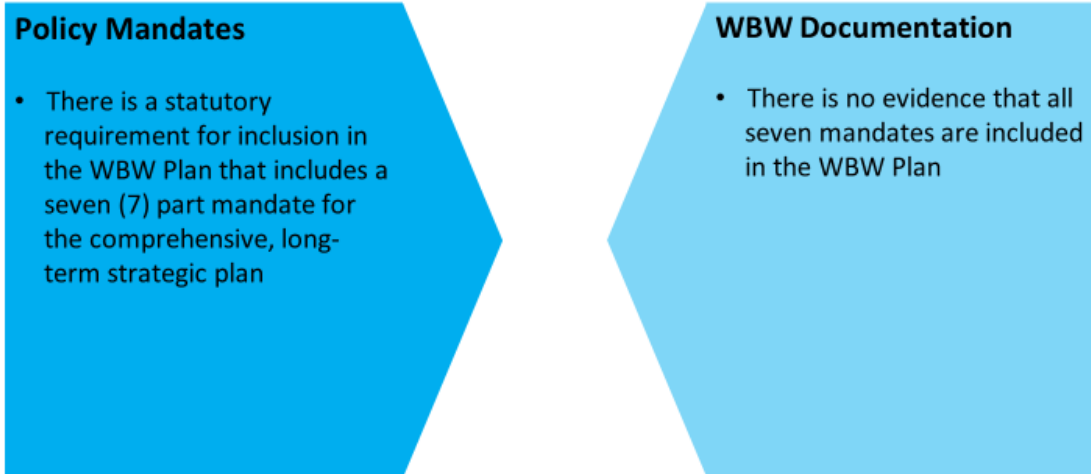
- Hold annual meeting for all parents regarding Title I requirements
- Provide parents with Title I programs, curricula, academic assessments and achievement levels
- Assist parents in understanding state standards and assessments, what they mean and why they are important
- Assist parents in understanding their child's progress

Create Professional Development

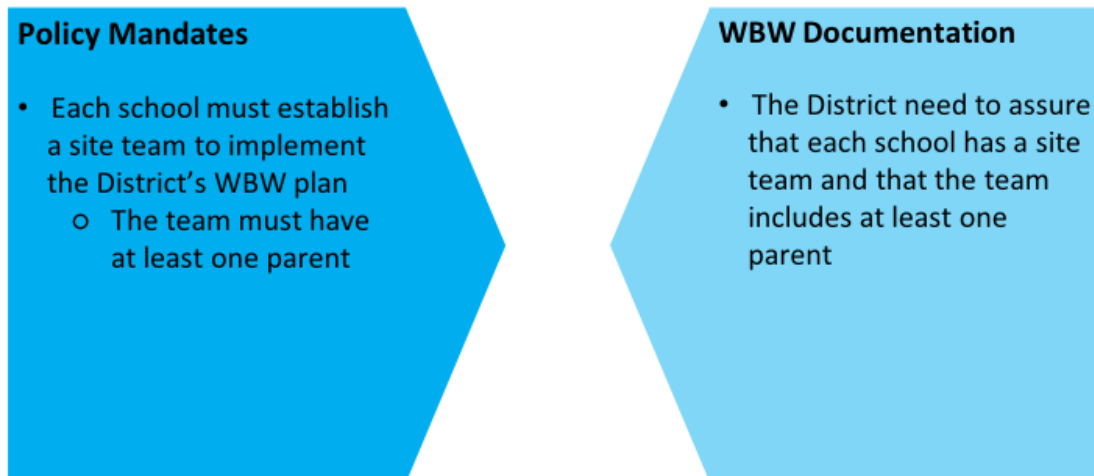
- Educate staff in best ways to engage parents

Appendix C: Gaps in Mandate Compliance

Gaps In Mandate Compliance Worlds Best Workforce



Gaps In Mandate Compliance Worlds Best Workforce



Gaps In Mandate Compliance District Title I

Policy Mandates

- There must be coordination with other federal and state programs involving family engagement

District Practice

- There is no indication or mention of coordination within the District Title 1 plan

Gaps In Mandate Compliance District Title I

Policy Mandates

- Broad stakeholder contribution is required in Title I planning and development
 - Must include parents

FEP Documentation

- DPAC appears to be used as the parent component, but it is unclear whether they are aware of that role or purpose

Gaps In Mandate Compliance District Title I

Policy Mandates

- Broad stakeholder contribution is required in Title I planning and development
 - Must include parents

FEP Documentation

- DPAC appears to be used as the parent component, but it is unclear whether they are aware of that role or purpose

Gaps In Mandate Compliance District Title I

Policy Mandates

- District must educate staff about the value and utility of family engagement

FEP Documentation

- There is no indication or mention of how the District educates and informs staff about the value and utility of family engagement
 - The exception is racial equity

Gaps In Mandate Compliance Other State Mandates

Policy Mandates

- A District committee is required to make recommendations to the School Board on developing and evaluating its Parent and Family Involvement Policy

Documentation

- We found no documentation to support this. It is possible that the DPAC is serving in this purpose.
 - If they are, are they aware of the role and purpose?

Appendix D: Family/Parent Liaison Survey and Responses

Parent/Family Liaison Survey Results, October 24, 2017							
A yellow-shaded box indicates respondent left an answer blank				A green box indicates answer was properly left blank			
1	1a	2	2a	3	4	5	
#	Are you the primary writer of the 2017-2018 FEP?	If no, the primary writer was	How many meetings did it take to draft the 2017-2018 FEP?	Of these meetings, how many were attended by the parents?	How involved were the parents in creating the 2017-2018 FEP?	How many parents contributed to the drafting of the 2017-2018 FEP?	How involved was your principal in creating the 2017-2018 FEP?
1	no	Assistant principal	3	0	Not at all involved	0	Slightly involved
2	no	Assistant principal	3	0	Not at all involved	0	Slightly involved
3	yes		3	2	Somewhat involved	6	Somewhat involved
4	yes		2	1	Somewhat involved	10 to 12	Involved
5	yes		1	1	Slightly involved	10	Involved
6	yes		2	1	Involved	8 to 10	Very much involved
7	yes		4	1	Slightly involved	3	Somewhat involved
8	yes		3	2	Slightly involved	5	Slightly involved
9	no	Principal	unsure	unsure	Somewhat involved	1 to 2	Very much involved
10	yes		2 or 3	2 or 3	Somewhat involved	4 to 5	Involved
11	yes		2	2	Slightly involved	20	Slightly involved
12	yes		2 (plus a survey)	3 (51 completed survey)	Somewhat involved	3	Not at all involved (an assistant principal was very much involved)
13	yes		4	3	Involved	6	Somewhat involved
14	yes	created in a committee	2	0	Not at all involved	0	Very much involved
15	no	Principal	4	0	Somewhat involved	0	Very much involved
16	no	It was established and just edited for 2017-2018	approx 5	2	Slightly involved	2 to 4	Involved
17	yes			1 or 2	Somewhat involved	10 to 20	Very much involved
18	yes		2	1	Somewhat involved	maybe 8	[indicated with star between Slightly involved and Somewhat involved]
19	yes		6	5	Involved	5 to 20 (5 intimately involved)	Somewhat involved
20	no	Principal			Involved		Very much involved
21	yes		2	2	Involved	8	Very much involved

Family/Parent Liaison Survey and Responses (2 of 2)

Parent/Family Liaison Survey Results, October 24, 2017						
A yellow-shaded box indicates respondent left an answer blank				A green box indicates answer was properly left blank		
6	6a	7	7a	8	9	
How much do you agree with the following statements?		Thinking about last year's FEP, was the 2016-2017 FEP updated throughout the year?	If yes, how many times?	How different is the 2017-2018 FEP from the 2016-2017 version?	If you could change one or two things about the FEP process, what would it be?	
My school's FEP fully reflects the school's family engagement # strategy and practices	The FEP requirement led my school to improve family engagement strategy and practices					
1	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	yes	3	Slight changes	A lot of effort goes into this and people do not read it (much) [inserted vertically]. Is there something more impactful that could
2	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	yes	3	Slight changes	Make it more valuable for parents
3	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	no		Slight changes	1) Creating a task force to draft, rewrite and generate ideas of how to engage families; 2) More resources given to FEC to provide
4	Strongly agree	Neither disagree nor agree	yes	2	Some significant changes	
5	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	no		Slight changes	
6	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	yes	1 or 2	Minimal changes	I think it has actually gotten easier the last few years after a basic template was
7	Somewhat agree	Neither disagree nor agree	yes	2	Some significant changes	It is hard to explain to parents the legal expectations. The format is very "teacherize"--not terribly parent friendly. It is hard to recruit parents to participate in the process. They usually respond that this is
8	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	no		Slight changes	
9	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	no		No changes	
10	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	no		Slight changes	Getting more parents engaged!
11	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	yes	2	Slight changes	I would simplify it--it is too oriented to compliance rather than focussing on actual school improvement ideas. If we were able to spend that time in developing the areas we want to focus on for the year, in concrete ways, it would be more useful. However, parents are glad to see that we are strategic
12	Strongly agree	Somewhat disagree	no		Slight changes	Parent survey works best at our school. At meetings, feedback is typical focused on families who are already highly involved because the parents attending are highly
13	Somewhat agree	Neither disagree nor agree	yes	1	Some significant changes	
14	Neither disagree nor agree	Neither disagree nor agree	yes	unknown	Slight changes [and] Some significant changes	
15	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	no		Slight changes	The process works well for our school
16	Somewhat disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	no		Slight changes	I was hired 1/2 way through the year 2016-2017, so my insight is informed by minimal experience with the FEP. I'm already more
17	Somewhat agree	Neither disagree nor agree	no		Slight changes	
18	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	no		Some significant changes	That the requirements of the FEP for the following year be provided in the year that it is being written
19	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	yes	2	Slight changes	The template and checklist for the FEP should be better synched.
20	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	yes		Minimal changes	
21	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	no		Some significant changes	Less jargon (academic/educational) and more family-friendly

Appendix E: Latino Parents Survey and Responses

Latino Parent Survey, November 8, SPPS										A yellow-shaded box indicates respondent left answer blank	A green box indicates answer was properly left blank
										1	2
Which of the following does your school or district do well already to help Hispanic students perform better academically? (Put a check next to all you believe make a positive impact).										What new or improved program would make it easier for students to succeed at your school?	
#	Newsletters	Parent Academy	PACs	FEPS	Parent-School Compacts	Parent Portal	Parent-teacher conferences	Other	Other, please		
1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0		Provide access to all information on scholarships and programs that private companies have for Hispanics	
2	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0		Mentorship program	
3	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	APPT	Increase in counselors of color, mentoring, and increase in teachers of color	
4	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0		Mentorship program for Latinos and more Latino principals (directors)	
5	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0		Mentorship program	
6	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0		A mentoring program to support students of the high school	
7	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0		Mentoring for hispanics. More motivation (Hispanic mentors for Latino students)	
8	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0		Mentor program	
9	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0		Communication with people in various professional roles	
10	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0			
Total	3	9	6	0	0	5	9	1		80% Mentoring program	
%	30%	90%	60%	0%	0%	50%	90%	10%			

Latino Parents Survey and Responses (2 of 2)

Latino Parent Survey, November 8, SPPS										
A yellow-shaded box indicates respondent left answer blank										
3										
#	Email	Phone	PACs	FEPs	Parent-School Compacts	Other	Other, please specify	If you proposed your ideal(s) above (in #2) to your school administration, how would you communicate it? (Put a check next to all you would try).	If you proposed your ideal(s) above (in #2) to your school administration, do you think they would act and try to implement your idea?	How much do you influence the quality of your child's education by being active with the school and district?
1	1	0	0	0	0	1	talking with counselor		Not sure	Very much
2	1	1	1	0	0	0			Somewhat	Very much
3	0	1	0	1	1	0			Very much	Usually
4	1	1	1	1	0	1	Conferences		Not sure	Very much
5	1	1	1	0	0	0		talk to the school principal herself (in person)	Not sure	Very much
6	0	0	0	0	0	1			Probably	Very much
7	0	0	1	0	0	0			Not sure	Very much
8	0	1	1	0	0	0			Probably	Very much
9	1	0	1	0	0	0			Somewhat	Very much
10	1	0	0	0	1	0			Probably	Sometimes and Usually
Total	6	5	6	2	2	3			40% Not sure	80% Very much
%	60%	50%	60%	20%	20%	30%			20% face-to-face	

Appendix F: Interview Guides

Parent Questions Guide

Thank you for agreeing to speak with us. We are completing a review of the SPPS Family Engagement efforts for our graduate program Capstone at the University of Minnesota. The interview should take about 15-20 minutes. I will leave you with some information about the University's research protocol and contact information in case you have any further questions after the interview. Your responses will shape our analysis, but nothing you say will be attributed directly to you.

Questions:

1. Are you familiar with the various roles that state and federal law has determined parents (and families) must play in the schools at both a district and/or school level? Can you tell us the ones you are aware of? (Ex. FEP, SCIP, Compact, Special Ed....)
2. Who in your school do you feel truly embraces parent/family engagement? Does a particular person or group take the lead in getting families involved?
3. Are you aware of the Family Engagement Plan? If so, can you describe what role, if any, parents contributed to the creation of that plan?
4. How was any collaboration in the development of the Family Engagement Plan, Compact or School Improvement plan conducted with parents managed?
5. How many meetings did you personally attend where the FEP was discussed? If you were not involved directly, do you know how involved other parents might have been? Describe the process as you know it.
6. How much, if any, of your time was spent on drafting the latest FEP? Do you know if other parents participated in the drafting of the FEP?
7. Do you feel your voice was heard and included in the FEP or other process where families are involved? In what ways?
8. Were there any voices you felt were excluded from the processes?
9. What benefit, if any, do you think the FEP and family involvement in general brings to your school? To your child's academic success?
10. What, if anything, would you change about the FEP process?
11. Do you have any final thoughts about family engagement that you would like to share?

Liaisons Questions Guide

Thank you for agreeing to speak with us. We are completing a review of the SPPS Family Engagement efforts for our graduate program Capstone at the University of Minnesota. The interview should take about 15-20 minutes. I will leave you with some information about the University's research protocol and contact information in case you have any further questions after the interview. Your responses will shape our analysis, but nothing you say will be attributed directly to you.

1. As a Family Liaison what responsibilities do you have in your school? (ie. Do you do other jobs or have other responsibilities beyond liaison?)
2. We're interested in how the Family Engagement Plan (FEP) came together this year. Can you tell us about the process? (prompts: who--collaboration and division of duties, what, where, when, how?)
3. Can you further clarify the level of input parents had, if any, in developing the Family Engagement Plan this year? (prompt: Can you think of a specific suggestion a parent made for the FEP last year that you included in the final version of the FEP?)
4. Would you say the parents who contribute to the FEP are representative of your school's demographics?
5. It must be a challenge determining how to involve parents in the many ways required in a meaningful way. What type of parent input to a process like the FEP would you characterize as meaningful? (prompt: Does fulfilling the parent engagement mandate for the FEP come from many micro-level actions, or does it come from a handful of big actions?)
6. (If principal input was not addressed in #2) Research suggests that school leadership (principals, etc.) can affect family engagement strategies. How important do you think executive leadership is at your school for family engagement? What, if anything, does s/he contribute to the FEP?
7. *For schools with big change year to year* (Como Park Senior High and Chelsea Heights): We noticed some pretty big changes in the FEP, comparing last year to this year. How did you come to make those updates? (prompts: where did the idea come from? Did the parents contribute to the development of the idea? SPPS feedback? Who performed the update?)
8. *For schools with little change year to year* (Como Park Elementary and Harding High): What would prompt you to make significant changes to your family engagement plans?
9. Do you feel that the process you use to develop your schools FEP is similar to other districts in SPPS? Or is your process more of an outlier?

10. Has the development of the FEP lead your school to improve family engagement strategies and practices? If yes, provide specific examples. If no, can you state why? (prompts: is it used throughout the year? Is it just compliance?)
11. Would describe your relationships with teachers as collaborative in promoting family engagement? If yes, please provide an example.
 - a. Do you believe that teachers in particular, and all staff more generally, embrace the concept and importance of parental/family involvement in the school?
 - b. How do you determine whether your family engagement programming was successful or could use change? How can you measure progress in family engagement? Do you think there should be more accountability for schools' FEPs?
 - c. Do you believe family engagement improves education outcomes?
 - d. Do you believe family engagement improves child behavior?
12. Is there anything else that is important for us to know?

Follow-up Assistance Request:

1. We would like to speak with a parent or two who was involved in the FEP. Do you have a question you would like us to ask them about the FEP process? Would you be willing to reach out on our behalf to see if any parents are interested in speaking with us in person or by phone?
2. Would you be able to introduce us to the principal/assistant so we can ask a few questions about family engagement at your school? Do you have a question you would like us to ask them about the FEP process?
3. Finally, may we follow up with you if there is a question or two that arises in the final weeks as we pull together our report?

Principals Questions Guide

Thank you for agreeing to speak with us. We are completing a review of the SPPS Family Engagement efforts for our graduate program Capstone at the University of Minnesota. The interview should take about 5 -10 minutes. I will leave you with some information about the University's research protocol and contact information in case you have any further questions after the interview. Your responses will shape our analysis, but nothing you say will be attributed directly to you.

1. I would like to learn more about the SPPS Family Engagement Plan (FEP) process.
 - a.) Can you tell me how it is developed at your school?
 - b.) Who takes the lead at your school? (Principal, a teacher, a team or the liaison?)
 - c.) Can you take us into that process? (please educate me).
 - d.) If there is knowledge of or a hint of a challenge: I have heard that other schools are experiencing X. What is your take on that? (I propose we move down to #2 below and continue the interview...not sure we really need a phone vs survey difference.
2. Is there a system in place at your school that either requires or prompts someone to step back and examine the bigger picture for what type of family engagement has been working or not working? (prompts: How do you know you're making progress or doing a good job?)
3. Do you see the Family Engagement Plan as a meaningful document for parents? For teachers? For improving student achievement?
4. Are teachers involved in the FEP process? Informed about it afterward? If not, why not? Do you think there are gaps between what is written in the school's FEP and teacher's understanding of family engagement?
5. Do you believe your Family Engagement Plan fully reflects the school's family engagement strategy? Practices?
6. Has the development of the FEP lead your school to improve family engagement strategies and practices? If yes, provide specific examples. If no, why not?
7. Did you ever speak with your colleagues in other SPPS schools about this process/situation (whatever is of interest)? Is this more of a norm or an outlier?
8. Is there anything else that is important for us to know?

Appendix G: Interview Summaries

#	Date	Position/Role	Method (face-to-face interview, email interview, etc.)
1	10.08.17	Representative, Bellwether Education Partners	email interview
2	10.24.17	MN Department of Education, Compliance	face to face
3	10.24.17	Parents at DPAC	focus group
4	11.07.17	SPPS Title One	phone interview
5	11.15.17	liaison	face to face
6	11.15.17	assistant principal	face to face
7	11.15.17	liaison	face to face
8	11.15.17	principal	face to face
9	11.15.17	liaison	face to face
10	11.16.17	assistant principal	phone interview
11	11.17.17	liaison/literacy coach/library coordinator	email interview
12	11.17.17	parent	phone interview
13	11.29.17	parent	phone interview
14	11.30.17	parent	phone interview

Interview #1

Email interview

October 8, 2017

Bellwether Education Partners

Q: How much stake can one put into a plan? What if a school has a good plan-writing leader/team, but not a good implementation leader/team? Thus far, I get the sense that it can be easy to copy and paste text into the plan, while very little of it is meant to hold the individual school responsible to concrete, measurable improvement. I am not cynical, but rather interested in making a recommendation for increased accountability. You encourage states to use the opportunity to continuously improve their ESSA plans over time, which is beyond accountable; it's practical. How can that practice and buy-in be built into a federal (or state) system?

A: I too share your concerns about the meaning behind a submitted plan. I'm not sure I know of any magic recipe to make it meaningful, but the best examples I've seen are from Massachusetts and New York, where they have more standardized processes with a required rubric, external experts, and some state-level accountability for outcomes. If schools continue to struggle over time, the state takes a more directed role in terms of the types of interventions required of the schools. If you poke around on [this site](#) you can see more about New York's process.

I haven't looked at Minnesota's submitted ESSA plan yet--although our team and our peers will be reviewing it this fall--but I'd be looking for some way to monitor the plans for their use of evidence and whether the identified schools are actually making directional progress. Without something like that, I'd worry the plans could be more of a box-checking exercise without any real change.

Interview #2

See Appendix Z for transcript.

Interview #3

Parents at DPAC	focus group
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I prompted the group with the following questions, but they had a lot to say, were self-directed and I felt like most of the questions were answered in the time I had with them, which was about 1/2 hour.

- 1.) What part of this template is helping SPPS follow Title I compliance really well? (underlying: I'm curious to know how well she knows it and believes in it)
- 2.) What part of this template has been difficult for the district to craft in a way that helps school comply or explain how they comply? (underlying: Where are they failing, and what recommendations does she make to our group working on improving the template?)
- 3.) Would this FEP template get unwieldy if SPPS added all the World's Best Workforce mandates related to family engagement? Are there enough parallels that it would make sense to expand the FEP? (underlying: Would they work together with Heather and other Title offices?)
- 4.) How or whether or where the template is focused on individual school improvement goals to increase student achievement (and equity?)
 - The FEP's are not only about compliance but best practices. They should be written to connect student achievement always and do it in a way that is also helpful in meeting and improving the individual schools goals.
 - The schools should ask themselves what their expectations are and what is the intent to work towards that. These are not intended as checklists....
 - It all comes back to beliefs and values. These are meant to be authentic with the goal of making parents as partners.
 - We should always be asking ourselves..."Who is writing the FEP's?" Do they have support? Is it just them? Do they have others to bounce ideas off of? This fact can make a huge difference in the outcome of the FEP's.

- Beliefs and values-When the leader of the school (the Principal) has innovative and robust ideas of family engagement, it is more likely the FEP will be a living document; and one of action...Not just lip service.
- You can only really “coach” those who show up regarding the FEP. There is a true disconnect...
- Suggestion from the group was that the FEP’s should be done in the Spring at the same time schools are doing their SCIP plans. This would align leadership, ideas, communication, etc.
- There is minimum understanding of the law
- One employee explained that some staff in schools who already have demanding jobs, like a behavior specialist, also are asked to wear the hat of family engagement. This can be an impossible task and most often that job gets put on the back burner.
- When we talk about the schools doing a “needs assessment” we think of reading, math, culture, climate....but need to focus more attention on family engagement
- The struggles that schools have, in this group’s opinion, are: How to include parents in the decision making in an authentic give and take way...There is real fear behind this and uncertainty about how to approach families. The schools also lack a system of monitoring and evaluating what they do....matching it up with what they say they are doing on their FEP. They need to ask themselves...DO we know if this works? Why or why not? Is this serving our community’s needs? Is this matching up with the intention of what we want to do? What is the impact?
- One person cannot be responsible for everything that falls under “family engagement” at schools, but this happens frequently. EVERYONE at a school should be invested, trained at the same level and be exactly on the same page when it comes to what it MEANS to engage families. Action plan!
- An idea came out of the group.(very “gap” document)In SPPS there is on the ground support and training for such specialists in schools in reading and math....there are COACHES that do this. There should be family engagement COACHES for schools, from the District.

Interview #4

SPPS Title One | phone interview

Summary not provided.

Interview #5

liaison

| face to face

As a Family Liaison what responsibilities do you have in your school? (ie. Do you do other jobs or have other responsibilities beyond FL?)

This is my first year at a high school. 25 years in the district.

Parent engagement is different here with four years invested instead of three. It means making parents feel welcome. We value and honor parents exactly where they are. That's big for me. That can't always happen, because of where I am right now. They will check in with the security guard and go to where they need to go and pass right by me. That is something I would like to see changed, and it will happen over time (the school is being remodeled and her office is near the main entrance, before one gets to the security guard, so it's not exactly out of the way or invisible). Once I develop a relationship and a trust, I know I can reach out to parents to work with me on documents or any invitation. They know I believe there is a purpose in knowing them that will make them better suited.

We're interested in how the Family Engagement Plan (FEP) came together this year. Can you tell us about the process? (prompts: who--collaboration and division of duties, what, where, when, how?)

That to me is a struggle, because I feel like--we still don't have parents that have really embraced the FEP or know about it. We try to say, "Can I just talk to you about FEP and what it means to the school or to you?" There just isn't a lot of buy-in. I have mixed feelings about our FEP, compact and SCIP. Parents are so busy. If you're going to get parents involved, and you're getting them to improve it, it's the same parents that are involved in the committees, the booster club. It's usually 5-12. Sometimes 15 on a good day.

Does this document represent this group here? (pointing to table of mostly people of color right behind us) I don't know that we've had our Somalis, Karin, Hmong families involved in this, because I don't know that they understand what this all means. I don't think staff understand what this means. If I went to a staff member and asked what do you know about the Title I meeting, they might know it is about the funds, and that's about it. A lot of this is about not having enough time. For instance, I'm not full time here. I'm expected to do the same amount of--and be in full compliance. I work four days a week. That's difficult. It's a budget decision. Trying to juggle these balls in the air and meet all the due dates that are in the Title I folder and not being able to be at all these meetings where all the compliance issues are being deciphered. It really is a lot for just one person. And you try to get multiple families in--coordinating schedules is really hard. I'm willing to do the work, it's just finding the time. They won't pay me if I stay after. But if I don't come in later, I miss an opportunity to meet with parents.

Busy work that keeps you away from talking to parents?

Exactly. That's really the truth. I am so busy that just making sure to dot my I's, crossing Ts and jumping through hoops to make sure I get roll calls, sign in sheets are recorded for events. I'm

spending so much time. (points to athletic director for affirmation). She sees me scrambling through papers. I'm not making excuses, it just is.

How do you determine whether your family engagement programming was successful or could use change? How can you measure progress in family engagement? Do you think there should be more accountability for schools' FEPs?

I think there is room to evaluate what works. I'm not sure that's the right term "whether it works." It's more like, "are we following through?" with this document, we are telling our parents--we're committing ourselves to follow through with these practices, meetings, ways of communicating. This is what we're going to do, because this is what our families need--interpretation, translation, etc. Are we following through on this? that is where you go through and check, yes, we had our conferences, people showed up, we had interpreters, parents were pleased we had interpreters, parents were pleased when we had the save the date robocalls. they said it's annoying to be reminded, but they work, so we continue to use that to get parents to events. that's how we have a heartfelt evaluation, because this is a promise we made to parents. this is the suggestion we had for parents to work on at home, and we're giving you tips on this--is that helping you work with your kids?

Interview #6

assistant principal

| face to face

Briefly describe the FEP process at your school (I don't recall the exact question, but something like it after I explained who I was and what we're working on).

The school looks at the FEP twice a year (spring and fall). There's a meeting each time, and they invite the parents.

What would lead you to change the FEP year to year?

More parent involvement in the FEP would lead to bigger changes each year. There's no one telling us to change it. We don't see a need. It's a lot of work to get parents in here.

Is there a system in place at your school that either requires or prompts someone to step back and examine the bigger picture for what type of family engagement has been working or not working?

In April or May's meeting, that's where there's accountability. We take stock of how things went. We'll hear from parents about this type of stuff.

Do you see the Family Engagement Plan as a meaningful document for outlining your school's FE strategy?

FEPs don't need to change that much or be referred to so much. I view the SCIP as more of the living document. (the nature of her responses by now indicated that FEPs weren't really the big issue for parents, teachers or her)

(question from liaison to assistant principal) Aren't the FEPs part of the SCIP, or is the SCIP part of the FEP? And the compacts are part of it all, too?

Of all the documents, the SCIP is what we'll refer to throughout the year. That's the big one. We paste the FEP and compacts into the SCIP. We have parents involved in our SCIP, too. We're required to do all of three, and that's why we do them.

The parents are involved in the SCIP through meetings and committees?

Yeah, at least a couple times a year.

Are the SCIP meetings separate from the FEP meetings?

Yeah, totally separate meetings.

If you could provide some feedback to the policymakers and district office who created the FEP requirement, what would you say?

HOW can we involve a more diverse set of parents in the FEP process? We don't know HOW. We know it's what we should do, but I'm still waiting for someone with an answer for HOW to do it.

Interview #7

liaison

| face to face

At one elementary school a particular person is listed on the FEP, but is no longer the true FL. Her past involvement is over 23 years working with families (fundraising, attend family functions at night, greet parents, get all interpreters for conferences and try to accommodate parents that need them.)

Calls home - good calls and bad calls. You build a relationship with parents when you call and they trust you. Not doing that this year.

Doesn't attend the meetings... another person does and does the FEP. They have a leadership team with a Parent who is very involved. Also the Asst. principal and principal and leadership team.

They don't have a lot of parents that get too involved – They do have parents who will volunteer to go on fieldtrips or in the classroom. The school has some parents who will help when teachers request them. She wouldn't say they have a huge parent pool that are interested. They have a lot of Hmong, Karin, Somali parents.

Interview #8

principal

| face to face

P: FL is on site. The way I use her is that she attends the meetings and then reports back to me and tells me what's been done and what they talked about. But the parent engagement is really my responsibility.

I: Really?

P: Mmm. Because we're a building that has one principal and one secretary and not a lot of extra people and so her primary job is really working with students on behavior and with parents in that role

The recording shut off here for quite some time. During this time we discussed how she involves the PTO in the plan – they brainstorm together at a PTO meeting. There is one teacher representative at those meetings. She didn't feel that they were particular great about doing their plan. Said there were many schools that did it better – had more staff to do so. She felt it was done as a compliance piece and not very valuable as a true representation of the PI/FE. It is posted in the hall, the SCIP is posted online and given to parents in a shortened form and she gave me examples of the SCIP, the Compact and showed me the online compliance tool that they have....it tells her where she stands on all the requirements. Title Support lets her know what is missing from "the file".

P: My goals is that if they leave here, I tell my parents if they feel a part of the community and they love learning we've done our job So I really stress that the classroom is a community and you are part of the community and there's a school community and I believe that the school is the heart of the community. So the more things we can do here, yes, the excitement um just getting to know the kids and families...

P: I know what the minimum amount is that I need to run a school and believe me – I am at the minimum right now. We are in the cafeteria wiping tables or somebody gets kicked out of class and I'm babysitting in here for two hours. Is that a good use of my time? I don't think so. I should be in the classrooms. So some of those kinds of things and we're kind of falling behind. It needs to be done.

P: You keep having these Parent Academies year after year. And I'm like, "Are you kidding me?" They say, "What are you doing to recruit?" and so I'm documenting what I'm doing to recruit?

We had the Parent Academy with only one signed up and we had some other maybes...that first night we had 4 staff and food for 25-30 people.

Oh you had food?

Oh yeah. And for the digital learning? They had food for that too! Pizza and sandwiches.

So the next night I said you guys you don't need. These people give us one facilitator and one daycare for

For one family?

For one dad. Who was in the program a year ago. The same damn program! He was new to our building and I think he thought it would be different.

Why not have them regionally. We are section E.

I think Parent Academy is good for folks new to the school, new to the community...

P: No. We've never been audited. So we have this electronic portfolio that we need to submit things in. And my person at Title One reads it and gives a red, yellow and green on whether it's

good. So they are doing all, they're interpreting the laws at the district level and then say "Yea, you might want to strengthen this piece you know for next year"

P: It would be really nice to know that...if your parents know all this stuff...that the idea is that your parents are helping you reach this goal. That's the idea behind all this. I don't know that the Family Engagement Plan is actually getting to that?

Interview #9

The principal mainly does everything with the Family Engagement Plan. (The FEP lists interviewee as the FL Contact, but the principal does the plan-see other interview.)

The FL described her job as dealing with behaviors of students, bus duty, incidents, lunchroom, students that can't be in class for whatever reason or need to do work down outside of the classroom. Says she's available for then. Also does attendance.

FL has contacts with parents when things are not going well, but she tries to call on good reports, too. Has phone conversations, emails parents. Parents like to get calls right away if there are issues. She works with ALL students, but there are frequent fliers. She doesn't do special ed, but handles the general population behavior issues.

No involvement at all with FEP, Compacts or SCIPS. She doesn't really know anything about it.

Teachers are "absolutely" involved with the families. States that there's pretty good communications with the teachers. Says the principal does a great job communication with parents...above and beyond.

"Absolutely" this school is a welcoming school! The PTO is fabulous. Very involved, and they very much have a voice at the school. One of the better PTO's. The population at the school is about 50/50 white and student of color. It's hard to draw in the minority because it's unknown as to why or what parents are coming to school for. To get that information out to them is tricky... Sending things home during teacher conferences is better because the teacher can explain things that go on otherwise when they get sheets at home in the backpack they are not knowing what it's about. They read math and they think it's for their child...it's a struggle everywhere, but the parents that are involved here are a lot, but it's not very diverse. It's really hard to get those parents to come in. A lot of them just send their kids to school and that's it.

It's hard to have the Parent Academy and seminars and draw the parents in for that. Talked about food at events as a draw, but she was unaware of whether the Parent Academy served food. Trying to get information out to parents with paper is not very helpful, but there's a need to get them to have a better understanding of what or how important it is. Understanding the information is super important - that the parents understand it. (Call-in interpreter's discussion)

Who leads parental involvement in your school? “The principal. She takes on a lot. She’s a great principal. Very involved. Listens to the teachers. She may not always agree but gives them a fair listen. “

The efforts are really put forth at this school. This is a smaller school. Interpreters can make the meetings long for others listening and it’s long for them, too.

Interview #10

The assistant principal called me and explained that he had passed out the liaison questions I emailed him last week to the committee that is made up of teachers, language and cultural specialist. He encouraged them to answer the questions and email me back. He also explained that he had a very short window to talk.

• *Can you tell me about your school’s FEP? How is it developed and who takes the lead in this process?*

Last year they had a full time Family Liaison/Title One point person. This position was eliminated for this year because of cuts.

The duties have been passed onto other administrators. The most involved person in monitoring the FEP is currently a teacher on special assignment named M. The assistant principal has very little to do with the FEP according to him. His role is to help update the information in different impact areas when it is brought to his attention by a diverse committee that is made up of teachers, language and cultural specialists. Part of this team’s responsibility is to be mindful of changes that may be needed in the FEP. He encouraged me to call M for further inquiries.

As a Family Liaison, could you describe your responsibilities at your school? (ie. Do you have other jobs/responsibilities at your school besides being the FL?) I am the literacy coach and library coordinator. I am also responsible for collecting and posting documents into the Title 1 folder. I go to the district Family Engagement trainings so that I can bring the information directly back to the instructional leadership team.

Could you please describe the process used to develop your Family Engagement Plan? (ie. Who is generally responsible for drafting the plan? Are public meetings held? What role if any, does school leadership, teachers, parents play in plan development?)

The school follows the template provided by the district and, has several breakfast meetings with families. She also invites families to come and talk about interests and concerns. She also checks in with families and we do a family survey. I take the information that we have and put it in the template and then the Principal shares it at a Family Breakfast and asks for more input from families. She also shares it with the instructional leadership team and then the staff at a staff meeting so that all stake holders are discussing the plan and giving feedback on it.

If parents are involved in the Family Engagement Plan development, can you clarify with a concrete example of how they have affected outcome?

At the Breakfast with the Principal, the families (many who don't speak English and have interpreter translate for them) say look at the engagement plan and say thank you for sharing with us, but we are not the educators, so you do what you know best.

Would you say the parents who contribute to the FEP, Compact and/or SCIP are proportionally representative of your school's demographics?

No - the templates are helpful for schools, but the FEP, the Compact and the SCIP are not a friendly genre that families can easily navigate. Schools are supposed to write them in family friendly language, but the instructions and the format are not family friendly, especially when more than half of the population are not native English speakers. The tools that schools are given to create these documents are not family friendly.

What, if anything, would prompt you to make significant changes to your family engagement plans in any given year?

It is difficult to have staff to cover family engagement activities that happen outside of the school day. It would be helpful if there were a way to compensate teachers for attending activities

beyond the school day. We have talked about ways to make the school more welcoming for families during the school day, but many of the classrooms are already overcrowded, so it is hard to have a large number of parents on a regular basis.

Interview #11

Summary not provided

Interview #12

Summary not provided

Interview #13

Question by interviewer: "How many meetings did you have?"

Answer: " With me?, I think I had one last year. After that, we had a lot of different meetings

after that"....(she starts to list the many meetings she was involved in. Example: the family fitness meeting)

Question by interviewer: "Do you think the school listens to your input?" Answer: "They listen. They go with the parents ideas and feedback."

Question by interviewer: " So, the reason that this document (the family engagement plan) is important to St. Paul public schools is because it's one of

the many compliance checklist items. They are like the Title One; all the compliance requirements. Do you recall anything about that meeting?"

Answer: "Yes, I remember meeting with the principal. A lot of parents came. We recorded every parent who came."

"They want to look at us as partners."

"We have diversity. We have Hmong, Karen, Spanish, black families, English speaking

parents...."

Question by interviewer: "Did you feel like it was a good use of your time?...The FEP meeting?" Answer: "It's a good use. You not only come for your child, but you come for yourself."

Interview #14

parent

| phone interview

"Jackie Turner would attend the American Indian Advisory Committee and mentioned that there was an open seat on the DPAC (District Parent Advisory Committee) and that was where you need representation. There was no explanation to what the DPAC was. Not a lot of room to question anything."

"DPAC kept a pretty tight agenda."

"I felt like everything was already decided."

Question by interviewer: "Were people speaking up and saying that things were a bad idea?" Answer: "Had I known at the time I would of questioned more."

Question by interviewer: "Did you ever see a family engagement plan in your time?"

Answer: "No, It was talked about, but not formally presented. What was formally presented to

us at the DPAC was the school calendar. They put a huge effort into the school calendar....but the family engagement plan piece-no."

"Parents need to be part of the planning, a big part of the whole process, not just for the feedback, which is what I shared with the district several times over. You can't present us this information after the fact."

"We are supposed to be giving you ideas of what is needed."

"I became very aware that the parents that were showing up were the only ones being asked for anything. I knew we were missing a whole population."

Appendix H: Notable SPPS FEP Practices

One example of a simple modification to the FEP Template was found in review of FEPs was Frost Lake Elementary, which included the following prompt in its FEP:

These families were involved with the development of this document (Attach List)
 [parent name redacted]

Frost Lake also developed a practice to specify in the FEP who is responsible for what. Both unique characteristics from Frost Lake provide a good accountability measure and management tool.

Actions	Date	Person(s) Responsible
Work with Family Involvement Committee to rewrite plan	May	Family Involvement Committee, parents, Administrative Intern

Similarly, Como Park Senior High uses columns to distinguish weekly, monthly, quarterly and annually scheduled events. For the sake of parents contributing to the FEP, it is easy to glance at and quickly understand it.

<p>Transitions between schools can be challenging, and we work to help families as their children start and leave our school.</p>	<p>For new students and families, we support the transition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide shadowing opportunities for students and tours for families of 8th grade students ● Bring ELL students from Murray to shadow Como ELL students. ● AP Advanced Placement information night ● Showcase our school to highlight our academic programs and our extra-curricular opportunities. 		Dec/Jan /	Feb	√
			Dec/Jan /	Feb	√
			Nov		√
			Jan		√
			April		√

Nokomis Montessori specifically addressed coordination of their FEP, SCIP and compact with reference to who, what, when and where. It provided a sense of how the school convenes these reviews and offers some transparency of process. “We reviewed our 2017-18 Title I Compact, 2017-18 SCIP and 2017-18 Family Engagement Plan at our May 2017 Site Council/PTO meeting.”

Frost Lake Elementary also describes curriculum efforts more clearly than most schools. A sample: “If requested by families, opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children, and respond to any such suggestions as soon as practically possible.”

Nokomis Montessori also provides a rare level of detail about sharing curriculum with parents: “Parent education is provided regarding Montessori methodology on September 21, 2017, from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m., with a family dinner between 5:30 – 6:00 p.m. Montessori Teachers facilitate presentations and free school-age childcare is provided.”

When the FEP template prompts: “What is the process for parents to follow if they have concerns about their child's learning?” most schools suggested that parents first speak with their teachers and continued with an alternative step. Bruce Vento Elementary provided a unique recommendation: "Through the family center and surveys, parents are asked to provide feedback on what they believe is working as well as areas more support is needed. Parent Connect topics are created based on parent’s requests and needs." Administration reviews results of survey and topics with teachers monthly.

Appendix I: FEP Scoring Review Table (8 pages)

FEP Legislation and Quality Scores (adapted from SPPS Family Engagement Plan Checklist) - Integration of Title I, Title III, SPED and SPPS Requirements and Quality Indicators										
Full (2), Partial (1) or non-(0)										
FEP Activity Prompt: Welcoming Environment Our school has staff member(s) available for families to discuss this plan and ask questions.										
Does the Family Engagement Plan: List the family liaison for your school. Our school communicates with families in many ways.										
Share the best way for families to be informed about what's happening at school--for example: "All student work and important papers come home in a Friday Folder" or "Our monthly newsletter" is full of important information for families" or "Watch our school's website spps.org/school for important information."										
Share the customer service expectation at your school										
FEP Evidence of Implementation Level:	Law/policy: SPPS	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for Outcomes	Section of the law/policy: §1116(e)(5)	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for Outcomes	Law/policy: SPPS	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for Outcomes	Law/policy: SPPS
PLAN Y	SCHOOL	Full (2), partial (1) or non-(0)	School employs a staff member whose time is spent on family and community engagement	School convenes a team to plan and implement family engagement strategies, which includes parents, teachers, and others	States that the school informs parents about programs, meetings, and activities and that the information is provided in ways understandable to parents	Describe how the school informs parents about programs, meetings and activities happening at school in ways that are understandable to parents	Communication strategies and materials are reviewed annually by families for effectiveness, and are revised or changed based on family feedback	Full (2), partial (1) or non-	Staff members have a common expectation of response time to parents' communication	Staff create welcoming, inviting cultures
1 2017-2018	Agape Sr High	1	0	?	0	0	?	2	?	n/a
2 2017-2018	Benjamin E. Mays Elem	2	2	2	2	2	?	2	?	n/a
3 2017-2018	Boys Totem Town Sr High	2	2	?	1	1	?	2	?	n/a
4 2017-2018	Bruce Vento Elementary	0	0	?	2	?	?	2	?	n/a
5 2017-2018	Cherokee Heights Elem	1	2	2	1	0	?	2	?	n/a
6 2017-2018	Cherokee Heights Elem	1	2	2	2	2	?	2	?	n/a
7 2017-2018	Como Park Elementary	1	2	?	2	1	?	2	?	n/a
8 2017-2018	Como Park Sr High	1	2	2	2	2	?	2	?	n/a
9 2017-2018	Farnsworth Elementary	1	2	2	2	1	?	2	?	n/a
10 2017-2018	Farnsworth Middle	1	2	2	1	1	?	2	?	n/a
11 2017-2018	Frost Lake Elementary	1	1	2	2	1	?	0	?	n/a
12 2017-2018	Gordon Parks Sr High	2	2	2	1	1	?	0	?	n/a
13 2017-2018	Hamline Elementary	1	2	?	1	1	?	0	?	n/a
14 2017-2018	Harding Sr High	1	2	?	1	1	?	1	?	n/a
15 2017-2018	Highwood Hills Elem	1	2	2	1	1	?	0	?	n/a
16 2017-2018	Humboldt Sr High	0	2	?	2	2	?	?	?	n/a
17 2017-2018	Johnson Sr High	2	2	2	1	1	?	2	?	n/a
18 2017-2018	LEAP Sr High	2	2	?	2	2	?	2	?	n/a
19 2017-2018	Linwood Elem & Middl	1	1	?	1	1	?	0	?	n/a
20 2017-2018	Mississippi Arts Elem	1	2	?	2	2	?	2	?	n/a
21 2017-2018	Murray Middle	1	2	?	2	2	?	0	?	n/a
22 2017-2018	Nokomis Mont North El	1	2	2	2	1	?	2	?	n/a
23 2017-2018	Nokomis Mont South El	1	2	2	2	1	?	2	?	n/a
24 2017-2018	Open World Mid & Sr H	1	1	?	0	1	?	1	?	n/a
25 2017-2018	Phalen Lake Elem	2	2	?	2	2	?	2	?	n/a
26 2017-2018	SP Music Acad Elem	1	2	?	2	2	?	0	?	n/a
27 2017-2018	Wash Tech Mid & Sr High	2	2	?	2	1	?	0	?	n/a
28 2017-2018	Wellstone Elem	2	2	2	1	1	?	2	?	n/a
2017-2018	average score	1.3	1.6	0.9	1.5	1.3	0.0	1.4	0.2	0.0

FEP Legislation and Quality Scores (adapted from SPSS Family Engagement Plan Checklist). Integration of Title I, Title III, SPED and SPSS Requirements and Quality Indicators							
Full (2), Partial (1) or non-(0)	Welcoming Environment	Transitions between schools can be challenging, and we work to help families as their children start and leave our school.					
FEP Activity Prompt:	Does the Family Engagement Plan:	For more about our work on racial equity, contact:	For new students and families, we support the transition by: Describe orientation, shadowing, open house, meet the teacher, and other efforts that families should know about. Elementary schools: outline specific coordination with Head Start and other preschool programs. For students and families moving to the next school in their pathway, we support the transition by: ..Describe visits, etc. Secondary schools: outline college and career programs and support available (dual credit, CTE, etc)				
FEP Evidence of Implementation Level:	Law/policy:	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for Outcomes	Section of the law/policy: (1116(e)(4))	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for Outcomes	
SPSS \$1001	Describe where to find more information about your work on racial equity.	Use racial equity guiding questions for family and community engagement in planning, implementing, and evaluating family engagement strategies	Families are actively involved in racial equity work at school; Staff honor and recognize families' funds of knowledge	States that the school coordinates the school's parent involvement programs with other programs in the community and in the school, in elementary schools – specifically speaks to coordinating efforts with pre-school programs	Outlines goals for coordination, and specifies how and which staff are responsible for the coordination of the school's family engagement programs with other programs in the school, district, and community	Engagement activities are specifically designed and implemented in partnership with schools in the pathway	
PLAN Y	SCHOOL						
1	2017-2018	Agape Sr High	2	?	?	2	2
2	2017-2018	Benjamin E. Mays Elem	2	2	2	1	2
3	2017-2018	Boys Toiem Town Sr High	0	2	2	2	1
4	2017-2018	Bruce Verito Elementary	1	?	?	1	0
5	2017-2018	Chelsea Heights Elem	1	1	1	1	1
6	2017-2018	Cherokee Heights Elem	2	2	2	2	2
7	2017-2018	Como Park Elementary	1	2	?	1	2
8	2017-2018	Como Park Sr High	2	2	2	2	2
9	2017-2018	Farnsworth Elementary	2	2	?	2	2
10	2017-2018	Farnsworth Middle	2	2	2	2	2
11	2017-2018	Frost Lake Elementary	0	1	1	2	1
12	2017-2018	Gordon Parks Sr High	1	1	?	1	0
13	2017-2018	Hardline Elementary	2	2	2	1	2
14	2017-2018	Harding Sr High	1	?	?	0	0
15	2017-2018	Highwood Hills Elem	0	2	2	2	2
16	2017-2018	Humboldt Sr High	1	?	?	1	0
17	2017-2018	Johnson Sr High	2	2	?	1	1
18	2017-2018	LEAP Sr High	2	2	2	2	1
19	2017-2018	Linwood Elem & Middl	1	0	?	1	0
20	2017-2018	Mississippi Arts Elem	1	0	1	0	1
21	2017-2018	Murray Middle	2	2	2	2	2
22	2017-2018	Nokomis Mont North E	1	0	?	2	2
23	2017-2018	Nokomis Mont South	1	0	?	2	2
24	2017-2018	Open World Mid & Sr H	2	2	1	1	0
25	2017-2018	Phalen Lake Elem	2	?	?	2	2
26	2017-2018	SP Music Acad Elem	1	?	?	0	2
27	2017-2018	Wash Tech Mid & Sr Hig	0	?	?	0	0
28	2017-2018	Wellstone Elem	1	?	?	1	2
2017-2018		average score	1.3	1.0	0.5	1.6	1.4

FEP Legislation and Quality Scores (adapted from SPSS Family Engagement Plan Checklist). Integration of Title I, Title III, SPED and SPSS Requirements and Quality Indicators									
Fall (2), partial (1) or non-(0)									
FEP Activity Prompt: Family Partnerships									
Our school-parent compact establishes the shared responsibility for student success between the school, families, and students. Families and teachers work together to develop the compact.									
Does the Family Engagement Plan: Copies of the compact are available. List the places/events where parents will receive the compact, and upload a copy of the compact to the SCIP									
The compact will be updated:									
FEP Evidence of Implementation Level: Section of the law/policy: 1116(d)(1),(2); 1116(d)(2)(A), (B), C; 1116(d)									
Implementing with Quality									
Mastering for Outcomes									
Law/policy: 1116									
Implementing with Quality									
Mastering for Outcomes									
1	2017-2018	Agape Sr High	0	0	n/a	0	0	0	n/a
2	2017-2018	Benjamin E. Mays Elem	2	2	n/a	2	2	2	n/a
3	2017-2018	Boys Toiem Town Sr Hig	2	2	n/a	2	2	2	n/a
4	2017-2018	Bruce Vento Elementary	0	0	n/a	0	0	1	n/a
5	2017-2018	Chelsea Heights Elem	1	0	n/a	2	2	2	n/a
6	2017-2018	Cherokee Heights Elem	1	2	n/a	2	2	2	n/a
7	2017-2018	Como Park Elementary	2	0	n/a	2	2	2	n/a
8	2017-2018	Como Park Sr High	0	0	n/a	2	2	1	n/a
9	2017-2018	Farnsworth Elementary	2	1	n/a	2	2	1	n/a
10	2017-2018	Farnsworth Middle	2	2	n/a	2	2	2	n/a
11	2017-2018	Frost Lake Elementary	2	2	n/a	2	2	2	2
12	2017-2018	Gordon Parks Sr High	2	?	n/a	2	2	0	n/a
13	2017-2018	Hamline Elementary	2	2	n/a	2	2	2	n/a
14	2017-2018	Harding Sr High	2	1	n/a	2	2	2	n/a
15	2017-2018	Highwood Hills Elem	0	0	n/a	1	1	1	n/a
16	2017-2018	Highwood Hills High	2	1	n/a	2	2	1	n/a
17	2017-2018	Humboldt Sr High	0	0	n/a	2	2	1	n/a
18	2017-2018	Johnson Sr High	0	0	n/a	1	1	0	n/a
19	2017-2018	LEAP Sr High	0	0	n/a	1	2	1	n/a
20	2017-2018	Linwood Elem & Middl	2	1	n/a	2	2	1	n/a
21	2017-2018	Mississippi Arts Elem	0	0	n/a	2	2	1	n/a
22	2017-2018	Murray Middle	2	2	n/a	2	2	1	n/a
23	2017-2018	Nokomis Mont North E	0	2	n/a	2	2	2	n/a
24	2017-2018	Nokomis Mont South	0	2	n/a	2	2	2	n/a
25	2017-2018	Open World Mid & Sr H	1	0	n/a	2	2	0	n/a
26	2017-2018	Phalen Lake Elem	2	0	n/a	0	0	0	n/a
27	2017-2018	SP Music Acad Elem	0	0	n/a	0	0	0	n/a
28	2017-2018	Wash Tech Mid & Sr Hig	2	0	n/a	0	0	0	n/a
29	2017-2018	Wellstone Elem	1	0	n/a	0	0	0	n/a
2017-2018 average score			1.1	0.8	0.0	1.5	1.1	0.1	

FEP Legislation and Quality Scores (adapted from SPPS Family Engagement Plan Checklist). Integration of Title I, Title III, SPED and SPPS Requirements and Quality Indicators																				
Full (2), Partial (1) or non-(0)																				
FEP Activity Prompt:		Family Partnerships				There are many opportunities for families to build connections to the school and to each other.				Parent Academy Seminars will be held in:										
Does the Family Engagement Plan:		Title I Annual Meeting where we will share information about school programs				Regular parent meetings, family nights, coffee with the Principal, muffins with moon. PTH- Parent Teacher Home Visits, if school participates. National African American Parent Involvement Day (NAAPID) will be on February 12, 2018. Hmong New Year, or other annual cultural events				Parent Academy Seminars will be held in:										
FEP Evidence of Implementation Level:		Section of the law/policy: 1116(G)(1) and (4)(A)		Implementing with Quality		Mastering for Outcomes		Law/policy: 1116(G)(4)(B)		Implementing with Quality		Mastering for Outcomes								
SCHOOL		Annual meeting informs families about Title I, its implementation at their child's school, its requirements, and opportunities for family engagement		Annual meeting is planned with the involvement of parents to determine the types of information and format parents want		Events are strategically aligned to school improvement and provide ongoing opportunities to build the capacity of parents and staff to engage		Strategies provide parents with information about curriculum, assessments, and grade level proficiency		Cultural and other informal opportunities for parents to build connections to each other and to school staff are held. Parents lead the decision-making about the strategies used to enhance the involvement of other parents		Events are strategically aligned to school improvement and provide ongoing opportunities to build the capacity of parents and staff to engage		Parent Academy seminar sessions		Parent Academy is aligned with school family engagement strategies		Parents are engaged in leadership opportunities		
1	2017-2018	Agape Sr High	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
2	2017-2018	Benjamin E. Mays Elem	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
3	2017-2018	Boys Town Sr High	2	?	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
4	2017-2018	Bruce Vento Elementary	2	0	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
5	2017-2018	Chelsea Heights Elem	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
6	2017-2018	Cherokee Heights Elem	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
7	2017-2018	Como Park Elementary	2	0	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
8	2017-2018	Como Park Sr High	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
9	2017-2018	Farmsworth Elementary	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
10	2017-2018	Farmsworth Middle	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
11	2017-2018	Frost Lake Elementary	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
12	2017-2018	Gordon Parks Sr High	2	?	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
13	2017-2018	Hamline Elementary	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
14	2017-2018	Harding Sr High	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
15	2017-2018	Highwood Hills Elem	2	?	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
16	2017-2018	Humboldt Sr High	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
17	2017-2018	Johnson Sr High	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
18	2017-2018	LEAP Sr High	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
19	2017-2018	Linwood Elem & Middle	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
20	2017-2018	Mississippi Arts Elem	2	?	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
21	2017-2018	Murray Middle	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
22	2017-2018	Nokomis Mont North E	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
23	2017-2018	Nokomis Mont South	2	?	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
24	2017-2018	Open World Mid & Sr H	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
25	2017-2018	Phalen Lake Elem	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
26	2017-2018	SP Music Acad Elem	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
27	2017-2018	Wash Tech Mid & Sr High	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
28	2017-2018	Wellstone Elem	2	?	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	
2017-2018		average score	2.0		0.3		1.0		1.3		1.7		1.5		1.3		0.3		0.1	

FEP Legislation and Quality Scores (adapted from SPPS Family Engagement Plan Checklist), Integration of Title I, Title III, SPED and SPPS Requirements and Quality Indicators												
Full (2), Partial (1) or non-(0)												
FEP Activity Prompt: Family Partnerships												
We work to make these meetings and events available for every family in the school.												
Does the Family Engagement Plan: Describe the process for translation and interpretation												
Describe the flexible number of meetings, whether childcare, food, or transportation will be available. Describe the specific outreach strategies for families of English Learners												
Our school supports families as advocates and provides opportunities for parent leadership												
What is the process for parents to follow if they have concerns about their child's learning?												
Law/policy: 1116(e)(1), 1116(e)(14)												
Describes how parents ask for help with their child's learning and how they request additional support for engagement activities												
Staff have the skills and knowledge to communicate about school improvement with families												
Not applicable												
FEP Evidence of Implementation Level:	Law/policy: 1116(f), SPPS	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for Outcomes	Law/policy: 1116(c)(2), Title III	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for Outcomes	Law/policy: 1116(e)(1), 1116(e)(14)	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for Outcomes			
1 2017-2018	Agape Sr High	Translations are provided in home languages of 10% or more of the student population at a minimum	(not specific)	0	1	0	2	2	2			
2 2017-2018	Benjamin E. Mays Elem			2	2	n/a	2	2	n/a			
3 2017-2018	Boys Totem Town Sr High			2	2	n/a	2	2	n/a			
4 2017-2018	Bruce Vento Elementary			1	0	n/a	1	2	n/a			
5 2017-2018	Chelsea Heights Elem			1	0	n/a	1	0	n/a			
6 2017-2018	Cherokee Heights Elem			1	1	n/a	1	1	n/a			
7 2017-2018	Como Park Elementary			2	2	n/a	2	2	n/a			
8 2017-2018	Como Park Sr High			2	2	n/a	2	1	n/a			
9 2017-2018	Farnsworth Elementary			2	2	n/a	2	2	n/a			
10 2017-2018	Farnsworth Middle			2	1	n/a	2	2	n/a			
11 2017-2018	Frost Lake Elementary			2	1	n/a	1	0	n/a			
12 2017-2018	Gordon Parks Sr High			2	2	n/a	2	2	n/a			
13 2017-2018	Hamline Elementary			1	2	n/a	2	2	n/a			
14 2017-2018	Harding Sr High			1	2	n/a	2	2	n/a			
15 2017-2018	Highwood Hills Elem			2	2	n/a	2	1	n/a			
16 2017-2018	Humboldt Sr High			0	2	n/a	0	2	n/a			
17 2017-2018	Johnson Sr High			2	2	n/a	2	2	n/a			
18 2017-2018	LEAP Sr High			2	2	n/a	0	0	n/a			
19 2017-2018	Linwood Elem & Middle			2	2	n/a	1	0	n/a			
20 2017-2018	Mississippi Arts Elem			2	2	n/a	2	2	n/a			
21 2017-2018	Murray Middle			1	2	n/a	0	0	n/a			
22 2017-2018	Nokomis Mont North E			1	2	n/a	2	2	n/a			
23 2017-2018	Nokomis Mont South			1	2	n/a	2	2	n/a			
24 2017-2018	Open World Mid & Sr H			0	2	n/a	1	1	n/a			
25 2017-2018	Phalen Lake Elem			2	2	n/a	0	0	n/a			
26 2017-2018	SP Music Acad Elem			2	2	n/a	0	0	n/a			
27 2017-2018	Wash Tech Mid & Sr High			2	1	n/a	1	1	n/a			
28 2017-2018	Wellstone Elem			2	2	n/a	0	0	n/a			
2017-2018		Average score		1.5	0.0	0.0	1.7	1.0	0.0	1.1	1.2	0.0

FEP Legislation and Quality Scores (adapted from SPPS Family Engagement Plan Checklist). Integration of Title I, Title III, SPED and SPPS Requirements and Quality Indicators													
Full (2), partial (1) or non-(0)													
Our school supports families as advocates and provides opportunities for parent leadership													
Describe how families will be involved in planning for school improvement and family engagement													
Describe how staff will receive professional development about working with families.													
ATP - If school participates, share how families can be involved in the Action Team													
Report cards and progress reports will be distributed													
Teaching and Learning													
Our school shares information about student achievement with families in multiple ways													
FEP Activity Prompt:													
Does the Family Engagement Plan:													
FEP Evidence of Implementation Level:													
PLAN Y	SCHOOL	Law/policy: 1116(c)(5)	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for Outcomes	Law/policy: 1116(e)(3)	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for Outcomes	Law/policy: 1116(b)(1) and (c)(3)	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for Outcomes	Law/policy: 1116(d)(2)(B)	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for Outcomes
1	2017-2018	Agape Sr High	0	0	?	?	n/a	0	n/a	?	1	n/a	2
2	2017-2018	Benjamin E. Mays Elem	2	2	2	1	n/a	2	n/a	2	2	n/a	2
3	2017-2018	Boys Toiem Town Sr High	1	2	1	?	n/a	0	n/a	1	1	n/a	?
4	2017-2018	Bruce Vento Elementary	1	2	1	?	n/a	0	n/a	1	0	n/a	?
5	2017-2018	Chelsea Heights Elem	2	1	1	?	n/a	2	n/a	2	0	n/a	?
6	2017-2018	Cherokee Heights Elem	2	2	2	?	n/a	2	n/a	2	2	n/a	2
7	2017-2018	Como Park Elementary	1	2	0	?	n/a	1	n/a	1	0	n/a	?
8	2017-2018	Como Park Sr High	0	0	0	?	n/a	1	n/a	1	1	n/a	2
9	2017-2018	Farnsworth Elementary	2	2	2	?	n/a	2	n/a	2	0	n/a	?
10	2017-2018	Farnsworth Middle	2	2	2	?	n/a	2	n/a	2	2	n/a	?
11	2017-2018	Frost Lake Elementary	2	2	2	2	n/a	2	n/a	2	0	n/a	?
12	2017-2018	Gordon Parks Sr High	2	2	2	?	n/a	2	n/a	2	2	n/a	?
13	2017-2018	Hamline Elementary	2	2	2	1	n/a	2	n/a	2	0	n/a	?
14	2017-2018	Harding Sr High	1	0	1	?	n/a	1	n/a	1	1	n/a	0
15	2017-2018	Highwood Hills Elem	2	1	?	?	n/a	0	n/a	?	0	n/a	0
16	2017-2018	Humboldt Sr High	1	1	?	?	n/a	2	n/a	?	2	n/a	0
17	2017-2018	Johnson Sr High	2	2	2	?	n/a	2	n/a	1	2	n/a	0
18	2017-2018	LEAP Sr High	0	0	0	?	n/a	0	n/a	?	1	n/a	0
19	2017-2018	Linwood Elem & Middle	1	0	?	?	n/a	0	n/a	?	1	n/a	0
20	2017-2018	Mississippi Arts Elem	0	2	?	?	n/a	0	n/a	?	1	n/a	2
21	2017-2018	Murray Middle	1	0	1	?	n/a	0	n/a	?	2	n/a	0
22	2017-2018	Nokomis Mont North E	1	2	2	?	n/a	2	n/a	2	1	n/a	0
23	2017-2018	Nokomis Mont South	2	2	2	?	n/a	2	n/a	2	1	n/a	0
24	2017-2018	Open World Mid & Sr H	2	2	2	1	n/a	0	n/a	2	2	n/a	2
25	2017-2018	Phalen Lake Elem	1	2	?	?	n/a	1	n/a	?	2	n/a	0
26	2017-2018	SP Music Acad Elem	0	?	?	?	n/a	0	n/a	?	1	n/a	2
27	2017-2018	Wash Tech Mid & Sr High	0	?	?	?	n/a	0	n/a	?	1	n/a	0
28	2017-2018	Wellstone Elem	0	?	?	?	n/a	0	n/a	?	2	n/a	0
		average score	1.1	1.3	1.0	0.5	0.2	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.5

FEP Legislation and Quality Scores (adapted from SPSS Family Engagement Plan Checklist). Integration of Title I, Title III, SPED and SPSS Requirements and Quality Indicators												
FEP Activity Prompt: Teaching and Learning												
Our school shares information about student achievement with families in multiple ways												
Does the Family Engagement Plan:	Parent-Teacher conferences are held	Academic Parent Teacher Teams (APTT) if school has teachers participating	Curriculum nights, Parent Portal workshops, college planning nights; Family nights – specifically aligned with SCP goals. Elementary Schools: Provide specific ways families can help build reading skills at home in K-3; if not at grade level	Law/policy: 1116(d)(2)(A)	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for	Law/policy: 1116(e)(1), MN Statute	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for Outcomes	Law/policy: 1116(e)(2), MN Statute	Implementing with Quality	Mastering for Outcomes
1	2017-2018	Agape Sr High	1	1	?	?	?	?	?	1	0	0
2	2017-2018	Benjamin E. Mays Elem	1	2	2	2	?	2	2	2	2	1
3	2017-2018	Boys Totem Town Sr High	1	2	?	?	?	2	?	0	0	0
4	2017-2018	Bruce Vento Elementary	2	2	?	1	2	2	0	1	2	1
5	2017-2018	Chelsea Heights Elem	1	?	?	?	?	1	0	1	0	0
6	2017-2018	Cherokee Heights Elem	2	2	2	2	2	2	?	1	2	1
7	2017-2018	Como Park Elementary	1	1	1	2	2	1	0	2	1	0
8	2017-2018	Como Park Sr High	2	?	?	?	?	1	0	1	1	0
9	2017-2018	Farnsworth Elementary	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	0
10	2017-2018	Frost Lake Middle	1	1	?	1	2	2	?	0	1	0
11	2017-2018	Frost Lake Elementary	1	2	2	2	2	2	?	2	2	0
12	2017-2018	Gordon Parks Sr High	2	2	?	2	?	?	?	2	0	0
13	2017-2018	Hamline Elementary	1	2	?	2	2	?	2	2	2	1
14	2017-2018	Harding Sr High	2	?	?	1	?	?	?	0	0	0
15	2017-2018	Highwood Hills Elem	1	?	?	0	?	?	?	0	0	0
16	2017-2018	Humboldt Sr High	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	1	0	0
17	2017-2018	Johnson Sr High	1	?	?	?	?	?	?	1	0	0
18	2017-2018	LEAP Sr High	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	0	0	0
19	2017-2018	Linwood Elem & Middle	1	?	?	?	?	?	?	2	1	0
20	2017-2018	Mississippi Arts Elem	1	2	2	?	?	?	?	0	1	0
21	2017-2018	Murray Middle	1	0	?	?	?	?	?	0	0	0
22	2017-2018	Nokomis Mont North El	1	2	?	2	?	2	?	2	2	2
23	2017-2018	Nokomis Mont South	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
24	2017-2018	Open World Mid & Sr H	2	?	2	2	2	1	?	2	2	?
25	2017-2018	Phalen Lake Elem	2	2	?	2	?	?	?	2	2	?
26	2017-2018	SP Music Acad Elem	2	?	?	?	?	2	?	2	0	?
27	2017-2018	Wash Tech Mid & Sr High	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	0	0	?
28	2017-2018	Wellstone Elem	2	?	?	?	?	?	?	1	1	?
2017-2018 average score			1.4	0.9	0.5	0.8	0.8	0.4	1.1	0.9	0.3	

Appendix J: FEP Guidance in Need of Improvement Based of FEP Scoring

The template and rubric provide no or very little understanding of how schools should respond to the following, based on the lack of data schools provided in their FEPs:											
Family Partnerships											
FEP Activity Prompt:	Our school communicates with families in many ways.					Working to change practices & systems		Our school-parent compact establishes the shared		There are many opportunities for families to build connections to the school and to each	
Does the Family Engagement Plan:	Share the best way for families to be informed about what's happening at school - for example: "All student work and important papers come home in a Friday Folder" or "Our monthly newsletter is full of important information for families" or "Watch our school's website spps.org/school for important information."		Share the customer service expectation at your school		For more about our work on racial equity, contact:		Copies of the compact are available: List the places/events where parents will receive the compact, and upload a		Title I Annual Meeting where we will share information about school programs		Parent Academy Seminars will be held in:
FEP Evidence of Implementation:	Mastering for Outcomes		Implementing with Quality		Mastering for Outcomes		Mastering for Outcomes		Implementing with Quality		Implementing with Quality
	Communication strategies and materials are reviewed annually by families for effectiveness, and are revised or changed based on family feedback		Staff members have a common expectation of response time to parents' communication		Staff create welcoming, inviting cultures		Families are actively involved in racial equity work at school; Staff honor and recognize families' funds of knowledge		Compact is individualized for each student's needs		Compact is individualized for each student's needs
Teaching and Learning											
Family Partnerships			Our school supports families as advocates and provides opportunities for parent leadership			Our school shares information about student achievement with families in multiple ways			Many programs before and		
We work to make the se meetings and events available for every family in the school.			Describe the flexible number of meetings, whether childcare, food, or transportation will be available. Describe the specific outreach			What is the process for parents to follow if they have concerns about their child's learning?			List programs that provide academic support for students		
Describe the process for translation and interpretation			ATP - if school participants, share how families can be involved in the Action Team			Report cards and progress reports will be distributed			List partners and the ir programs, especially academic programs		
Implementing with Quality			Mastering for Outcomes			Mastering for Outcomes			Mastering for Outcomes		
Translations are reviewed by parents before they are sent home or used with all families			Parents help develop training for staff			Student progress is celebrated with families			Partnerships include family engagement and family feedback in their programs		

Appendix K: MDE Interview Transcription

The meeting took place at the MDE Building in a first floor conference room at 1:00 pm on October 24th, 2017. Three people were present: 2 Interviewers and 1 interviewee. It was a formal, but comfortable setting and ambience. The appropriate handouts/IRB forms were distributed and explained. Contact information was provided.

This transcription is included as a sample of the group's efforts. It was a particularly informative interview and thus included in the report.

HH: K and I are part of a small group that I think I told you about earlier and this is part of our Capstone that we're doing. And our charge is to look at these Family Engagement plans that, um, Title I schools are mandated to, um, fill out every year and to also, to do a legal analysis with a, what you do best, the law.

K: Not just Title 1 *all* law that impacts schools. That's what we were asked to...

HH: Not just Title 1. (laughing)

K: The parent component, the parent component.

MDE: (expressions of overwhelm)

HH: So we are only focusing on the PE component and kind of looking at the gaps, is what they've asked us to do for them.

K: They, they seem to think that are gaps with what the various, all the Title's, WBW at the state level and then IDEA and some of the others...they believe that some of their sites or maybe even at the district they're missing some components of the law.

MDE: So then are looking at what the law would have to say and the implementation – the gaps.

K: Um hum

HH: Yes

MDE: Okay

K: Of SPPS...just one district

MDE: Just that one... (laughing)

K: ...just that one little district. (*chuckling*)

HH: So we wrote out a couple questions, um, for you and Kim, kind of, just if I'm missing anything just will let me know. Um, and you're gonna take some good notes, and I wonder if l

should take good notes, too. Okay. So, a question that we had - In your opinion, do you find value in these current SPPS FAMILY ENGAGEMENT Plans um, from your job here at a state level.

MDE: We do not collect the school plan.

HH: Okay

MDE: We only collect the district plan.

HH: Okay.

MDE: Um, so, um (*short pause*), the value is that they're very general and they should often (*long pause*). You just want to cover all your bases (*very quiet and hard to hear*) how you implement it - to be there to see how it played out.....

HH: That makes sense.

K: So we were sent the SPPS FAMILY ENGAGEMENT plan which, as I recall, was sort of a document that looked like the ones that they gave their schools but on the left side it had their categories and on then right side it sort of had links of different thing that they were...

HH: Yea, I sort of remember that.

K: So we were given that. So, that is what you would collect from them?

MDE: Right, I think

K: What would you do with it?

MDE: We, it has to be attached to their application.

K & HH: OK

MDE: And when the district is monitored they would look at that.

HH: OK

MDE: When the application is submitted, we'd ensure that it was attached with that document. To ensure that it is done, at least. And then we have to look at the funding - because the funding, when a district (*too quiet to hear*) their dollars they're required to, um, set aside at least a min of 1% of their allocation to family engagement.

HH & K: Umhum

MDE: And so then of that 1%, minimum, 95%, 90% of ESSA has to go to the school.

HH: Did you say 95%?

MDE: No, 90% of the minimum of the 1% of the allocation. OK, so...okay you got it. Um, and that is a requirement. So, the district *has* to spend that. You *have to* spend that on family engagement.

K: So when you say district let me see if I understand this. Most of the sites have a FAMILY ENGAGEMENT coordinator or point person at the schools. Would the salaries of those individuals in aggregate count toward the spending.

MDE: It could.

K: Okay, so one of the other things I recall was that the money could be used for is staff development on parent engagement?

MDE: It can be used for a number of things.

K: Okay, I just recall that specifically being called out so I thought we were looking at this that is one other area we would need to look.

MDE: Now these are all district and school decisions but the parents should be involved. Okay so we have to understand that...

K: We're going to be looking at that

MDE: And now we determine that whatever amount of money that is that, um, now we get together with families or parents and say "okay, these are our needs. These are what we have to do because there's a set of things that the district has to do and you have to provide professional development, you have to be able to support schools, materials and what not and coordinate with other programs, um, with FAMILY ENGAGEMENT. So, where are your needs?

HH: So now we are talking about individual...

MDE: I'm still on the top part of the district.

HH: Okay

MDE: So, we are still talking about the big picture here. So ,what so do we want? – I'm thinking hypothetical –What do we want to do?

K: Now, before you go on, I want clarification here. Parents have to be involved not only at the school levels in making the plans, but also at the district level in deciding how that money gets spent. Parent help decide how the money is spent.

MDE: Right. We have not moved down to the school level yet.

K: So both places?

MDE: Both places.

HH: Okay that an interesting note.

MDE: You see, your district has...I'm going to be bouncing around on things... so let me know. Let's get the main components. You have to have... to get Title I you have to have parents involved in this plan. And so okay, and that's all supporting kids that are not going to make the state standards. And so that's the big plan that you have to submit to your district. And that's got your allocation and all your money in there, okay. So, we need parents involved in that- your consulting them. Now, of that big plan there is a FAMILY ENGAGEMENT piece and there's where we get to talk money because parent's, that's part, in my little thinking and I have a tendency to think in an ideal world when I think Family Engagement because I think holding the bar high is the best. They should have a very significant say. I kind of think of it as their money because this is how you are going to support me as a parent. All of us. There is that 1%. Okay. And we know that of that 1% only 5% can stay at a district level. Of the 1%. If you go over the 1%, which Minneapolis and St Paul typically do because they get a chunk of change. Then you might do some other kind of programming like buy, um, liaisons at schools.

HH: Right

MDE: But it's their choice. I'm saying here, I'm giving you examples because this is *all* district decisions. They just have to follow the letter of the law.

K: So could the district decide, just to be clear, could the district decide "our parents have told us that every school needs a liaison and so at the district level we're going to fund that"? They could use their 5% of the 1% (and they won't) but they could do that.

MDE: They could do that.

K: Or they could spend their money in a different way. I don't know what they are choosing

MDE: But you see that is only the 1%, there's 5% there and so the thing you want, you are correct, they could do that, um, but you have to fulfill a lot of other requirements so you are going to have to do that one way or another...so are either going to use that 1% or use more money...

K: But my thinking here is that won't happen because they don't want to spend their 5% of the 1% on staff every building so they use...

MDE: It's a big chunk of change

K: Right, so they use their money somewhere else. So what my thinking is... it appears that all the buildings have a family liaison so somehow or another that message has gotten down to the

schools that that is a good way for buildings to spend their money. Because it's independent at the building level.

MDE: Exactly. Or the building, I'm not sure how St. Paul does it, but the building could say...you know, let's say I get an allocation and I'm at Jackson Elementary and I get my title allocation is, I don't know, you know let's say \$300,000. Well, with the \$300,000 I may buy two teachers and a parent liaison out of my money. Now, is that how St. Paul work, cuz some people don't give local control like that to Jackson. I'm not sure.

HH: Yea

MDE: But they could. They could do that and they could then say

K: They could do what?

MDE: Or they could buy all teachers and let some other kind of funds by the district come in and pay for this liaison...it doesn't have to be Title.

K: Right. The Title has to be spent, but it doesn't have to be spent on liaisons. They could use other money.

MDE: The could say...When I worked at Bruce Vento we had summer programs. So, we used our Title Program [money] for summer programs. We hired staff and I was the family liaison person. You know, it's how you want to juggle your budget. You know, it's how you want to juggle your budget. Um. Okay so not we've got that piece and parents come involved here and they should be saying this is how we want to spend our money and that money, that 95% that we talked about? That would go...a district has the choice of giving it equitably to everybody or we could say they have, what they call Parent Academy is that what St. Paul has?

HH: Yes. Supallo in Minneapolis.

MDE: Right. We want to put on that program at 5 of our schools and see how that goes. Maybe they are going to say "We are going to give that 95%, the remainder, to these five schools so that can put that on. They are all title schools and we are going to give them that so they do that." And all the other schools they don't get any money for that. From that 1% - they could use their allocation if they want to or they could use if from wherever else they wanted to because just think one, I say this to districts, give me one program in your district that doesn't require family engagement and the beauty now, of ESSA, is this coordinator, this blending, this braiding of funds. And the nice part about it is that your districts like St. Paul, all your title schools are school-wide programs – are you aware of the two types of title programs?) (affirmative sounds). You can virtually, if you have your plan for your school wide program you can start blending your funds. A family engagement night, say my school was going to get one of those parent academy programs...I am going to get special ed. involved, I'm going to get Indian ed. involved, I'm going to get some of my equity money involved, my title money involved. I can get my preschool because they can help with daycare and all the way around.

HH: Mmhmm

MDE: Sweet. And your ELL parents! You've got it all covered now and you don't need to worry about "Oh, golly you can't come because you're special ed." and "you can't come because you're Indian" and we have all those different groups. No, now we can bring it all together and we can make it happen. So, you can do things like that and there is that element of knowing what is required and then really thinking out of the box.

HH: That would be great.

MDE: You can be creative!

HH: So, you can do more with less. That's what ESSA helps.

MDE: YEs

K: So, in your role, you except the plans you staple them to their application and you wait to see what districts are chosen for closer look by the feds.

MDE: They are monitored. And big districts, well you are dealing with SP and they get monitored like every three years

K: So then, when they're...

MDE: Which isn't typical

HH: What you're saying is that they are looked at to be monitored much more than rural ones.

MDE: Oh, yes. By far.

K: So, they get chosen in 2018 or 2017 to be monitored and then those plans are opened up more to be scrutinized a little closer by....

MDE: The people who are doing the monitoring.

K: So, not the state?

MDE: No.

K: The state does the collection and...

MDE: No. the state monitors. The feds haven't monitored in a long time.

K: So, if they get chosen you do the monitoring?

MDE: We do the monitoring... You know. Yes, but let me backup. You never know when the

feds are going to kick in. I mean.

HH: That's what they do.

MDE: That's what they do. Exactly.

K: So, you just continue to keep your files accurately and so that when you get tapped you have everything you need ready from whatever district they tap into...and then you do a deeper dive.

MDE: Right and they have been doing that, if I could just back up, they have been doing that in the Obama Administration they were doing that via phone. They would give a list saying these are the documents we want you to send us. So, we send them the pile of documents that they want and then they look over them and there's a conference call

HH: Got it.

K: Okay and has it ever happened that they say "oops, this doesn't count" or "you didn't do it properly, your parent involvement program failed"?

MDE: Yes...

K: And then what happens at that point?

MDE: What happens at that point is a corrective action plan.

HHL Ok

MDE: So, often times with when the monitors go out, districts often get dinged on notification. And by notification, I mean there are certain notification requirements by ESSA, like you have to let parents know if a teacher...they have to let you know a teacher's qualifications, that they are teaching on a variance or if they...any number of things. So, you've got about 5 or 6 notifications and they don't have documentation of that. "Oh, we did it, we did it." But you don't have documentation. So, "what's your plan?"

HH: Is this this where like your school improvement plans come it?

MDE: No.

HH: This is totally different.

MDE: No. This is monitoring. So, this is what happens when you get dinged. When you get dinged then it's a non-compliance you have to develop a plan on how you will rectify that.

HH: Oh. Right.

MDE: "We are going to put it in our handbook, it's in our procedures and it will go out every

spring. We'll keep documentation of the calendar", whatever they've got, the handbook or whatever. However, they decide to do it. UM. So, they give you a plan on how this is going to occur. One of the things, like I say it's often family engagement that is dinged and it is often dinged on parent notifications.

HH & K: Mmm or Okay

MDE: Because people forget that, you know, they have to notify all the 10th and 11th grade parents that they can request to have their child's name removed from the college and career guides and the military. "Oops, we forget to do that." Because we don't serve. maybe all their Title program are in the elementary. And they don't think that the law pertains to them...

HH: That's so interesting. I used to teach the Parent Academy when it first opened up and that was part of their curriculum – was just this.

MDE: Mmhmm.

HH: It's like, make sure you know that, it's like a list of your rights.

MDE: Right, the parents right to know is really what it is.

HH: And in your mind that's the ding.

MDE: I mean in a typical ding...if you look around the state it's a real typical ding.

K: Are there any others you think maybe we should look at? We are evaluating, not for quality really necessarily, we're looking over the Family Engagement Plans to see what, and some of them are a little more descriptive which makes me wonder whether maybe they got dinged and they are more descriptive because they've learned their lesson on that and other schools it could be already out there on their website and just not mentioned on their Family Engagement Plan.

HH: That's a good point.

MDE: It should be mentioned...

K: In their plan.

MDE: Yea. That doesn't have to be mentioned in their plan.

K: But it could be and when you are listing all the resources...Is there anything else besides that one that comes that's regular that schools get?

MDE: A very big one is the compact.

K: Oh, okay, they do have a question about the compact on theirs

MDE: The compact...

K: They are both required by federal law...

MDE: What is required is that you develop an agreement between the parent and teacher and there are certain requirements that should be included in that agreement.

Such as, you know, that the teacher is going to explain where are the state standards, whether the child is performing at grade level, what benchmark they are on, and the curriculum that the site is using to support that child to get them at grade level. What the classroom is doing to support that child at grade level.

K: So, you're saying something that was actually is a question that came up when we were talking. The compact is discussed in two ways. It's discussed as something required by federal law that each school has to have a compact, but then they refer to it in one place that I saw about an individual child. So is the compact a general plan that a teacher needs to do with the parent or literally is every child, can a person see themselves as an individual child in it.

MDE: It has to relate to every specific child

K: Okay. so, both are in there.

MDE: Both are in there. Yes, because if I'm a teacher I am going to be telling you something, and I'm going to be telling her something else...

K: So, the compact describes *how* it was done?

MDE: It just has to say "we are going to talk about this"

K: With every parent.

MDE: With every parent as it relates to their child.

K: OK

MDE: Because how I help my child may be may not be what you do. Or how I communicate as a teacher with you, because I may not have a cell phone so... How am I going to communicate with me?

HH: Absolutely.

MDE: But we have to talk about how *we are* going to communicate and the things that I can do. So, we've made this, we've developed this agreement with families. And Connecticut has this wonderful tool on their website about developing a Compact that's for student achievement. And because the tricky thing is it gives parents ideas. And so a teacher has a plethora of things they can share with parents with respect to how they can be involved. How they can support their child. And if you do it ideally, you ideally do it at grade levels because we are all 4th grade

teachers and we know what they're learning and we know ...everything. It will look different at Kindergarten. *It is not a document that is sent home and signed. That is not a compact.* Because the requirement is to have this agreement for a teacher to review and to have a conference when we talk about it. And when you look at the compact ...there is really nothing in the compact that you wouldn't be talking about. If I go to the conference I'm gonna want to know how my child is performing on the test. I'm gonna want to know what they're doing to help her. I'm gonna want to know if there's anything I can do at home to help and I'm gonna want to know if there's a problem how you and I are going to get on top of it.

K: And so, when they get dinged for it is it because they don't have it? Because it's not well done? Where do they get in trouble?

MDE: They don't seem to know

K: They just write the compact up and...

MDE: The teacher will provide a good curriculum or something. The school will support meeting the state standards and the parent will get the child to school on time.

K: And so, the school needs to prove how they're, how they're...

MDE: Therein lies the challenge.

K: Yea

MDE: Therein lies the challenge. Because it's easy to just say "here, just sign it and bring it back" and there I have my documentation. Done. They fail to realize that this is really a best practice. You want to be doing this. So when I was in the St Paul Schools, I thought it was the cat's meow because we had this three copied deal, we all agreed and we talked and it was signed and I had my documentation and the parent could take one home, the teacher had one and we were all in agreement. But they it just become a done...

HH: A checklist.

MDE: Uh um. It loses the intent... You can have a parent sign. There's a whole, you can get into this thing that parents don't want to sign anything, I don't want to sign a contract.

HH: You sign something and you're like, "What am I signing" (*laughter*)

MDE: Yea you really just, to me, I, you can do that but you really want to have the conference. I just, if we did what in my mind works...all four of us guys got together, we're all fourth-grade teachers, we've had an informal focus group with some families, we've talked about the elements that have to be and how we can convey that. We wrote down the suggestions...umm this the agenda for my conferences, I have my parents sign in like they always sign in. Good (*claps hands*) there's my documentation. There's my agenda, everything we went through, there's my sign in sheet you collect them, scan them, put them in your electric file and you're

done. It's taken care of.

HH: mm hm

K: So, do you train districts to, I mean at the department level to do this sort of thing.

MDE: I, we talk about it. I haven't done a lot. My responsibility in family engagement...um...It's one of very many. But it's the one I want to, you need it to do this.

HH: Yea

MDE: I'd focus on just doing this and it'd be very nice if we had a team. Because you have to be able to communicate with families and paper isn't, and with staff, isn't always the only way. We need to be able to skype, we need to be able to webinar, we need to have to go out there and look at districts. My challenge has been, um (*pause*) I need to have time to do this.

HH: I can imagine it's like a full-time job.

MDE: It's way full time. It's way full time. (*laughter*) I was going to say that you guys should come to the training on Thursday. But, okay.

HH: Well that actually answers a lot of our questions. The next question I have I feel like you've already answered. Is there anything that SPPS Family Engagement Plan does not contain that would be worthy? Of any others that are good examples, that don't have to be in St Paul that you see of their plans what you're talking about? Um. But it sounds like you don't necessarily go through each, that's not part of what you do.

MDE: When I look at the districts that I do, SP is not my district, I work with a template. I utilize a template because my thinking is the plan is all well and good. But if I'm going to give a parent a 7 or 8-page plan – I'm not going to do that. I would much rather have something like that, um, be on a website for parents to look at.

K: That was part of our question...

MDE: If you give me a checklist so I know how. At the district level, the districts should really be ensuring that schools are doing these things. So if I'm getting at a school level I'm going to want to know approximately when this is going to occur and who do I need to contact. That's really the biggest thing. Parents want to know what they can do at home so give me some simple things. Can we, and everybody virtually, there aren't too many people that don't have cell phones...even people that live in poverty. How many districts text? How many teachers text? And when I'm looking at Parent Engagement, the other issue that I'm finding is critical...do the state report card goes out, the student report card the district that sends out. Schools should be telling parents explicitly where their child is performing. Not that he's doing 'really good'.

HH: So, you think the school should be. Like, the schools should be comparing their like

individual kids like at a conference or something to the state report cards.

MDE: Everyone should know the state standards. I should know if my student is proficient. Are they performing at grade level? I don't want to know that he's doing really good "Oh, he's gotten so much better." Better than what? I haven't found that to be...it happens occasionally, and districts are getting around to standards based report cards...I'm not sure if MSP is doing that. But when parents...and what can I do to help – when I don't have time to turn around and answer that....

HH: (too quiet to hear)

MDE: Ya,..that's really practical. I mean I don't know about you guys but I just love it when someone gives me a little tip? "You know what? Have you ever thought about playing the 'what if' game with your kids?"

HH: Right. Absolutely. Ya.

MDE: Have them put away the groceries. That's a good thing! It helps them learn, It helps them sort.

HH: Yes.

MDE: "Oh, really"? You know?

HH: What grade? Did you say you taught at Bruce Vento...

MDE: I was the Family Liaison person. Ya.

HH: Okay. Did you have your own classroom?

MDE: I, I did the resource room

HH: You did. Okay, okay.

MDE: In a number of schools in SP.

HH: Okay.

MDE: Fun!

HH: Okay

MDE: And meeting those parents. And people don't get...they have a hard time, they don't think parents are going to understand...

K: We definitely found that in the research portion of this, before we're getting to the plans portion of this. You know there is plenty of research supporting that families do want to be involved. Sometimes they need help in what it is. And we're also hearing from schools that it's not the teacher's job to teach parents.

MDE: But they must remember that being involved is different from being the teacher. We don't expect parents to teach.

K: They can support

MDE: They certainly can support. "Talk to the baby." (*laughing*) You Know.

HH: Absolutely. I think that's what Kim was just saying that's what the research says that not anything new. What have we learned about early childhood development and then what have we learned about age appropriate development and tools, actual tangible tools that parents can do. Um, and you had mentioned this, just to circle back to one our question is, I have 3 kids in St. Paul and I think that I am probably one of the minority that know that Family Engagement Plans exist and it's only because I'm doing this. But even before this, I don't know how important in your mind is it that parents know they exist and should they actually you know, I mean they are supposed to be a part of creating the individual school ones but I also know that there is this missed opportunity for parents to not necessarily, they don't necessarily know that these not only exist, but what are they used for and can they look at them and can they be a part of them? I'm assuming from what you're saying that that is important

HH: Yes

K: And federal law says they must be involved, but again interpreting who "they" is ...is it three parents that were, that wrote the plan and one of the things I'm doing in this research is comparing last year's plans with this year's plans and I'm finding that some instances there will be the identical plan with the date changed. Well, parent's may have been involved in developing the one a few year ago, I doubt very much they were involved in writing this particular plan when the only thing that changed was dates.

MDE: Well, that's a really good point because the parent involvement plan especially at the school level should directly relate to the goals of your school.

HH: Hmm

MDE: So. If your school hasn't done well in math – what are we doing, because you have to be able to talk about the curriculum, you have to be able to talk about the standards, you have to talk about the benchmarks, so parent know. And you have to have activities that are going to support students math skills. SO, having your typical fall carnival okay...what's involved – I'm not saying you can't do it, but how you going to do that to support math. Or your turkey bingo. Well, we could. But tell me how. So you're really, the most important thing and I think that people who come to training that I offer or am a part of, they are always kind of surprised that Family

Engagement should be supporting your academic goals.

HH: Cool

K: Mm hm. It's interesting, years ago that is something that I did as a parent in our school. We aligned our goals for PTA at that time with what the goals were for the school. So, we didn't just bring in speakers to bring in speakers, we brought in, if they needed math, we brought in speakers or math or whatever. They were all geared toward curriculum and that was a hard change for parents who the idea of family involvement was spring carnival. Well if the spring carnival is a fun thing, but if it doesn't support the school [goals] then it doesn't belong in the plan, for one thing. It may be something you want to do and have people with time do it, that's fine, but it really doesn't support the plan.

MDE: It should always support the plan of the school

K: That's a mindset change for a lot of people.

MDE: It is! That's what I'm saying. And that is critical. It's a critical change because you have to, because FAMILY ENGAGEMENT is intentional. This is called school. We are educating our children. That's what we're doing here and we need your help mom and dad (affirmative sounds/nods) and community. And this year we need your help on math.

HH: Well, Kim and I have also been doing a lot of research on, you know, Epstein always comes up – Joyce Epstein and her six areas, and the thing, you probably know better than anybody, but what we liked about her plans is there is this redefinition that's always included in parent involvement. So, it's not the days of parent involvement means just showing up for a PTO meeting or it only means being able to go to a parent-teacher conference or it's only going on a field trip. And I think that's where you can be creative and that's, you know, where, that this communication, miscommunication with our parents occurs when they think of Parent Involvement. It's very boxed.

MDE: Yes.

HH: And maybe that the school districts responsibility to say there are so many different ways you can volunteer.

MDE: You don't, but you don't ever have to come to the school.

HH: You don't ever have to step in the school if you can't.

MDE: Maybe you can't do that. You can't. When I was working in parent involvement. I wasn't thinking of schools like that. I was attending conference. I was staying on top of homework when they needed to, and we were talking and things like that. But when I was working in parent involvement it was all day every day. From 7 to 10 because you're there doing it. But, ya, that's a real big, real big piece. It's, and I would say you have a wonderful opportunity to be able to educate people about that. It's about intentionally student achievement.

Unless your data is so strong and it's such awful behavior that you may, you have such challenging kids and there are a few schools like that you can (*can't hear the word.*)

HH: Absolutely.

MDE: If you are just keeping the waters calm, let's build relationships here because...I mean I look at the kids, I mean I got into PE because of the teachers in my school. They were wonderful. They made me feel like I could do this.

HH: That's true, isn't it? It really can depend on that relationship with the parent and the teacher. And some of the...I did some qualitative research on the teacher home program and I love it and I got to talk to the union and the, you know, I just think that we're going to reinvestigate with our work. That is utilizing that program, and, um, whether that's a question or another allocating. But I think sometimes that it can come down to that very personal relationship that one parent has with the teacher that can then change...and I think part it's research that it takes these little, um, what do they call them? Little touches...little touchstones that it's like a teacher reaching out to an individual family can make all the difference in the world.

K: So, Heidi's been focusing on that and my "extra", in addition to the Epstein model stuff has to do, I've been focusing a little bit more on the staff development component and the needs there

MDE: Yes. That reminds me...

K: ...or pre-service training.

MDE: Oh, nice!... have you looked at the Dual Capacity with Karen Mapp?

K: Hmmm. I don't think...

HH: Oh wait a second! You do know that author. You know who she is. I don't know if...

K: Maybe I'm just not putting it together.

HH: Ummm. I'll share, I'll share...

K: Okay.

HH: Part of that is her charge. Is that...I know that author.

MDE: Karen Mapp?

HH: Yea.

MDE: Oh, she's a mother from Harvard. She's the new Joyce Epstein and she's worked with

Joyce and ...and Ann Henderson

K: Yea, I know Ann.

MDE: That parent, that, that piece about the staff development. Is St. Paul doing something like that? In Family Engagement?

K: They're not, but one of the things that I'm hoping through our research on this that it can be a suggestion at the end of the research. That "You're doing really well using Epstein's model in this and this and this area, and we're seeing these things in your plans, but that there are some other areas like the home visiting seems to be falling out of favor right now even though the research shows how beneficial that is. That, that might be an area you might want to rethink *or* you might want to be putting a little more of your time and money into the teacher training component." Uh, and everything I'm reading says it's not a one-shot deal.

MDE: No, it's not (*affirmative sounds*)

K: It's a really comprehensive and the pre-service piece, the research was showing that over 50% of colleges and teacher training programs are doing something – it's not particularly the best thing- but they are doing something now. So at least 50% of colleges are hitting it at least a little bit – mostly early childhood, to be honest.

MDE: Uh, You...these are just igniting something that just really got me going. But I do really want you to look at the dual capacity, um, framework for Family Engagement. It came out of , um, the Obama administration.

K: Okay.

MDE: It is stellar. Because it has the different outcomes and it has these different components and its really, it's dual capacity because Family Engagement (pause)... I, I think of it in my mind, if I'm having a party and I don't bother cleaning my house or getting ready for guests. I just want them to come. And we're going to have a movie night and whether or not they want to watch that movie or not or they like the food, I'm gonna have them. We never do that. We always clean our house and get ready for the company that's going to come. (We have people like that on our staff – whispered). We've had 15 years of NCLB with millions, if not billions of dollars on professional development and if there is an ounce of family engagement training in them...and yet research shows that it's one of the strongest.

K: Absolutely. And it sounds like once they get it, they get it and it becomes who they are as a teacher.

MDE: Yes!

K: But some of the research was showing even pre-service teachers with just a tiny bit, if it's not a real comprehensive training they still don't think it's part of what they need to think about. There the, you know, it's what...I have an education background too, you're the sage on the stage. You're the smart person, you're going to bestow your knowledge on all these little bodies

and you really have to change our way of thinking to understand that it's not just me, it's all of us here at this school including the parents and that can come...

MDE: And I've been talking about that in the department that I'm very tired of ready instruction we've had years, decades of that and we have...so that piece is a really significant one.

HH: We'll highlight that one (chuckles)

MDE: Well start looking at their plans! How much staff development/

K: Only one, only one have I ever seen any mention of that. But what they *have* done, and we're picking on SP and we aren't trying to sway you one way or another...

MDE: No!

K :...but that's what we've been looking at, but they, um, they have spent a ton of time on equity training. Um, if they spent the time and energy on Parent Involvement and Family Engagement that they have on the equity piece or *combined the two*...

MDE: *Combining the two!*

K: That would be fantastic!

MDE: Hello! Especially when you look at the environment of our culture today. It's so adversarial with everybody. And this one has the potential to not have those because you know what? We all want the same thing.

HH: That so true..

K: And so when I look at the plans and they say if you have questions about our equity work contact this one person. That's what they're asking them to put in the plan. Well we've said that's fine to have someone designated, but what are you doing about it? That's what should be in your plan.

HH: Uh hh.

K: You got all this equity training...now how are you utilizing it to involve the parents in a new and different way. So, I think an opportunity is there.

HH: To get on this (*couldn't hear word*) if we could get on you. You can always get on this side and everyone's scrambling on this side... So much more. Not only be effective, but be sustained.

MDE: And this is best practice and that's part of your plan. The districts under Title should be providing staff development and the natural (*couldn't hear*) and the schools should be doing that!

K: Who should be getting that. Just so I understand, from our thinking way up here...who should these Family Engagement Plans that we're looking at and we're not really evaluating, but looking at year to year which is evaluating in a different sort of way, who are those meant for? Is it purely, In your way of thinking, are those just a compliance issue or are they a practical, we should be using this plan for our work? And then, whose responsibility is it to evaluate those?

MDE: In my eyes, in my opinion it's a real practical tool. Because it's developed to meet school goals. We want families engaged because we want to meet our school goals. And I like to go with the Headstart model in that Family Engagement is everybody's job. It's just not mine because I'm identified. Because Epstein is huge on this, I'm huge on this. You do it as a team. it is not her job and I can forget about it. So, therefore we *all* should know what's on that. Because I'm a teacher I want to know what I should be doing for Family Engagement? What do we have planned for the 4th grade kids that is going to support... We know what is going on with this group of kids. What can we be doing to help them?...to help their families to support their education? In my mind.

K: Okay, but should the families also be a part of this team?

MDE: Well, yea. A

K: And should they have access to this plan...

MDE: Absolutely, yes, yes families should and, and when I'm talking about the team I'm sorry I'm not being explicit.

K: You mean everybody.

MDE: it's a given that families are involved. Now having said that. Would I have been involved? Probably not. I lead a busy life. My family leads very busy lives. Not every family is going to be involved in that way. Epstein when she came out back in the day, she gave levels of involvement. And you know what? There's not too many that come to that level and that's okay.

K: But if a document is created with the input of one or two or three parents, I don't know how many are on their team, but whatever their team looks like that develops this and then it's posted someplace and other people have an opportunity to give input.

MDE: I think of all the multiple ways you could do that. You know, when you send a note home you could refer to the link...

K: "Please refer to this and if you have any comments let us know or suggestions."

MDE: It's there all the time. "We said we we're going to be having our fall festival we're going to be focusing on math and here's the link if you want to look at it." The whole document in there! Here's the link, if you've got further questions here's the link that will be on there with all the time, the dates, the ...everything I need to know.

K: Right.

MDE: You've done that and texted people. You've got it all there. And then coming back to the whole thing, yes indeed, you are always evaluating! You are always evaluating for the effectiveness of it. Now maybe the effectiveness of it is that we really wanted in the 4th grade to get these 6 families . *Did they come?*

HH: So, you would be suspicious if you saw a Family Engagement plan that had not changed from year to year? And they only thing that had changed is the dates.

MDE: Absolutely because you can't – everything is different all the time. And Family Engagement is about student achievement and you are always looking at your school goals. If your school never goals I go back and look at your data and start looking on the website and say ooo...

K: This is interesting and that may be a component we suggest and just put in the notes and we can think about. This really, they are given a template to fill out and it can be, a few schools actually personalized and added a few things that weren't asked for because they felt it was important as a team- clearly a team had working on it – um

MDE: I love that.

K: Yah.

HH: Some were impressive! Keep on going...

K: I lost my train of thought

HH: Comparing schools. Not changing from year to year.

K: We just have to think about making a suggestion... Oh this is what I was going to say, on the template we just have to make a note that the school should state what are the ultimate goals. What are the issues that that Family Engagement Plan is addressing. It's not just about a Family Engagement Plan in the abstract - its focused on your personal school and what your personal school goals are and nowhere in the plan does it say that. Even at the top, even if they had a small paragraph saying here are the areas we are really focusing on this year and here are the activities in the plan that support those needs.

MDE: That's the beauty of Epstein. Because she is very clear about "What's your goal?" and "What is your objective?" and "How are you going to reach that goal?" and then "What different types of involvement are you going to do that support that will support this activity to reach that goal?"

K: Right, and I'm thinking a little bit as you described the compact um maybe the family engagement plan should have a little bit....I mean the Compact has a set requirement, I mean, here are the things that you need to put in your compact but it's individualized for each child or

how even though it's a plan it's still able to be modified.

MDE: It [compact] has to be able to be modified to reach each individual child and that gets to be real tricky in some people minds and you have to evaluate everything to know whether its effective or not. Is your compact effective? How are you going to measure that? Well you could have a little handout a sheet for parents to fill out if you wanted that or to have the fall conference or in the spring...I don't know.

K: But you could treat your Family Engagement Plan the same way even though it is a template that the district says you need to fill out in order to meet federal requirements. And here are the things you have to meet, which we will be plugging in because that is part of our role here, but also it can still be modified to meet the individual needs of that school based on that individual schools results.

MDE: It must... it must.

K: And we don't see that called out specifically on the form, nor do we see that place for those differences to be listed on the form, and there could be a small area for us to recommend for that, too. That's quite helpful.

HH: Yes, that gives us some ideas.

MDE: Also do you need to know state statute for Family Engagement Plans

K: I think the only thing that I found – state statute mirrored the federal law but...

MDE: Yes, but they added stuff.

K: Okay then we probably need to know what those additions are. I don't know...

HH: I wonder if Sara..

K: I sent her links to the state statute.

MDE: If you link to the state statute it will tell you there. It's the bottom section of state statute and I didn't bring in with me, but it's to the effect, *if* your district has a board approved policy.

HH: Like a racial equity policy?

MDE: A Family Engagement policy.

HH: Oh, Okay. Yes.

MDE: And I would venture to say that at least 75%, at least 75% if not more of districts around the state...St. Paul couldn't be included, that had their board approve it then...

K: What is the board approving?

MDE: Their Family Engagement Policy.

K: That's a "may" in state law right now if you're not a Title school.

MDE: Right. But if you *do* then you *must* have a committee – advisory committee – of parents that are not employed by the school/the district that advises your school board.

K: Right.

MDE: So then the reviewing or evaluating Family Engagement activities that would be the piece that you make sure that when you go to the schools. What's your evaluation of the effectiveness of your policy. And the effectiveness of your policy is really that you're getting those most at risk kids families engaged. So how are you measuring that? Is that attendance, is that...I don't know how they are measuring that or what this issue is. So, each one of those required elements are in the school policy, those are evaluated in the lump sum of the school policy.

HH: MMHM

K: Okay. And this is even if the school policy is not specific to Title...just if they have a policy. Or are you talking about a Title Parent Involvement policy

MDE: I short of jumped back from a school policy to the Title I policy. Evaluation... Does it matter? Yes, it does matter. Because that's where you are reviewing them. Because that's where you're looking at the data. Every activity has goal and a desired outcome and how are you going to measure that.

K: That piece we haven't really seen.

MDE: That's the Epstein stuff! When you start looking at the Epstein tool she's very, very clear and it's helpful because it reminds people, oh we really (missed words) it's helpful because we want to raise student achievement so it may not ...you can't say we had an event and we had 250 people come. Well that's nice, that's good, but how are you tying that into what Title I should do? It is to raise student achievement and to get those five parents that were most hard to reach. Did you reduce the barriers? That kind of thing.

HH: umhm

MDE: There's that state statute. I'm just saying that most districts have a Title I, board approved district policy – ding ding.- you are going to be responsible for what the state statute was talking about. Make sense?

K: I don't know. We're going to have to think about that one. I was on the school board in Rochester a few years ago and it was one of the things I said we were going to have on the books and so we created a Family Involvement policy. It was NOT specific to Title I it was just a

policy that *all* schools in our district had to follow. And we tried to do the same thing at the state but at the last minute it was changed to “may”, rather than “must”.

MDE: Right. And if that is still in effect at Rochester Public Schools then they would fall under the state requirement.

HH: Then we should really check to make sure Sara has that as part of her evaluation cuz she’s doing our legal.

MDE: How long do you have this? When do you have to present?

HH: December 4th.

MDE: Oh, my goodness.. (laughing)

K: Sara’s doing the legal part, we’re doing the Family Engagement part and Mark is doing other things. It’s a lot. I actually wish we had a year to do this.

HH: I do to.

MDE: That what I was thinking...are you going to be done in June?

K: I wish.

HH: We have this kind of deliverable we have to give our client on Dec. 4th but, you know, when you do something like this. She’s pretty open about this, it’s like okay when you dive into something like this it’s like kind of technical like this, the boring legal analysis that Sara is doing and this comparison thing and there’s always going to be kind of this area where we can say because of research or because of conversations we think you should look into this or you know, so that’s the part that we could take a whole year. We have so many other ideas but we just don’t have time to do it.

MDE: Right. And I would want to say that with FAMILY ENGAGEMENT as far as the state monitoring goals, FAMILY ENGAGEMENT is always one of the top 5 findings.

K: Of issues that need to be addressed

MD: Of issues that needed to be addressed.

K: And this is in Title programs.

MDE: Yes, this is just in Title programs

HH: Okay, well.

K: Yea, we know there is a little bit of family stuff in WBW but it doesn’t’ have the level of

scrutiny that any of the Title, because federal funds come with. ... Has anyone ever lost their funding or you just give them the opportunity to fix it and schools fix it.

MDE: (nodding head) And many times we're working with schools who don't want to fix it. Many do, it's not like they don't want to...they didn't know.

HH: And that's part of our work, too., is how can you and I think at the district they can make it easier for the schools to know what the schools to do and why. Why do you need to do this? So that is the part of what they can use the whole they can go to school, hey you know, Wellstone, this is important and this section is important and just to get them better empowerment over why it's done right.

MDE: And it, and if people can get away from thinking that this is something different. Because chances are you are already doing it. And now let's just tweak it to be intentional for student achievement and talk very clearly about the state standards, grade level standards and the benchmarks you are working on.

K: MMM

MDE: And then you're pretty much doing it . (laughter)

HH: It's like take away the idea that this is something brand new and form scratch and really empower the school so you know what? *You are probably doing everything but let's make sure you are aligning with the student and tweaking it here and there.* Instead of overwhelming.

MDE: And, yeah, it's that kind of communication. We are not trying to ask to fill your plate, we are making you to act smarter

K: And when, a lot of Epstein's work and SPSS what we're seeing is about partners. It's not just about partners, it's not just to do what they want, but to do what you want done. And, again when you're working with PTO's and PTA's who might want to do the fun stuff, doing the fun stuff that moves the dime on student achievement is where you need to go, but that's real...

HH: (can't hear)

K: I know that there are partners out there that want to come in and do something, but if that something that they want to do is not really helping you move the dime on student achievement it may be the time you say "thank you" if you'd like to help us with this, this is what we need to do and if then say no then for right now. But that's a really hard thing for schools to do. Especially if it comes with (money sign)

MDE: Exactly (laughing)

K: No one want to say no to that.

MDE: Stay focused!

HH: Thank you. Somethings we get into our zone and it's nice to hear from someone who focuses on this all the time.

MDE: Well, thank you! I'd love to see your final report. No names or anything....

HH: It will be posted on the college website...

MDE: They are so very lucky they will get your suggestions!

K: We'll see how lucky they think they are when they see it (laughter). We hope it will help them move beyond that this is just an activity we have to do to meet compliance...

Small talk about careers...