

Spread the Pledge!

Ten Steps to Implement the Family Engagement Toolbox

Project Appleseed

Implementing the Family Engagement Toolbox in 10 Steps



A Step-by-Step Guide for Schools

The [Family Engagement Toolbox](#) from Project Appleseed is a comprehensive, research-based system designed to help schools build stronger relationships with families, increase participation, improve communication, and support student success. The Toolbox is grounded in Project Appleseed’s “[Six Slices of Family Engagement](#)” framework and aligns with [Title I ESSA requirements](#).

This implementation guide is designed for any school, district, family engagement team, or Title I program seeking to create a sustainable, schoolwide family engagement strategy.

STEP 1: Build Your Family Engagement Leadership Team

Before launching the Toolbox, schools should establish a leadership team responsible for guiding implementation

Include:

- Administrators
- Teachers
- Counselors
- Parent liaisons
- Office staff
- Family representatives
- Community partners

Responsibilities:

- Coordinate activities
- Review engagement data
- Plan events and outreach
- Monitor implementation
- Evaluate progress

The Family Engagement Leadership Team should meet at least four times per year to guide implementation of the Family Engagement Toolbox. Quarterly meetings help schools review progress, evaluate engagement data, plan upcoming activities, address challenges, and ensure that family engagement remains aligned with school improvement goals throughout the year. Strong implementation works best when family engagement becomes a shared responsibility across the entire school—not just one department or individual.

STEP 2: Introduce the Six Slices of Family Engagement

The Toolbox is organized around Project Appleseed's **Six Slices framework** which is explained in the guide "**Strategies for Engaging Families**". Schools should begin by introducing this framework to staff and families.

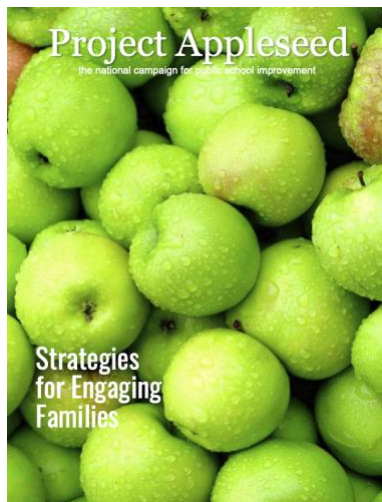
<https://www.projectappleseed.org/sixstandards>

The Six Slices:

1. Welcome All Families
2. Communicate Effectively
3. Support Student Success
4. Speak Up for Every Child
5. Share Power
6. Collaborate with the Community

Suggested Activities:

- Staff discussion sessions
- Professional development workshops
- Team reflections
- School climate walkthroughs
- Family focus groups



The goal is to help staff understand that meaningful family engagement goes far beyond attendance at school events.

STEP 3: Conduct a Family Engagement Needs Assessment

Before implementing activities, schools should evaluate their current practices.



Review:

- Family participation rates
- Communication systems
- Volunteer opportunities
- School climate
- Accessibility barriers
- Cultural responsiveness
- Decision-making opportunities

Use:

- **Project Appleseed workshop survey results**
- Staff surveys
- Family surveys
- Listening sessions
- Walkthrough observations
- Parent feedback meetings



Schools should identify:

- Current strengths
- Areas for growth
- Barriers to participation
- Families who may feel disconnected



This process creates a baseline for improvement.

STEP 4: Launch the Parent Engagement Pledge! *Engage All Families!*

The **Parent Engagement Pledge learning compact** is one of the cornerstone tools in the Toolbox. It creates shared responsibility between schools and families for student success. <https://www.projectappleseed.org/pledge>



Recommended Implementation:

- **Target use during parent-teacher conferences**
- Introduce at the beginning of the school year
- Distribute during registration or open house
- Share digitally and in print
- Translate into home languages

Encourage Families To:

- Read with children daily
- Volunteer when possible
- Monitor homework
- Maintain communication with teachers
- Support attendance and learning habits

The Pledge should be presented as an invitation to partnership—**not as Title I 1116 compliance paperwork.**

STEP 5: Use the Parent Engagement Report Card

The **Parent Engagement Report Card** helps families reflect on their involvement and identify ways to support learning at home. <https://www.projectappleseed.org/reportcard>

Best Practices:

- Introduce alongside the Parent Pledge
- Use during conferences
- Include in family workshops
- Encourage goal setting
- Revisit periodically throughout the year



Schools can use this tool to strengthen two-way communication and build shared accountability.

STEP 6: Create a Welcoming School Environment

Project Appleseed's **"Red Carpet Treatment"** helps schools evaluate how welcoming they are to families. <https://www.projectappleseed.org/red-carpet-treatment>

Conduct a School Walkthrough

Evaluate:

- Front office interactions
- Signage and directions
- Building cleanliness
- Accessibility
- Multilingual supports
- Family resource visibility
- Tone of communication

Ask:

- Do families feel respected?
- Is the school easy to navigate?
- Are all families represented?
- Is communication warm and inclusive?



Small improvements often create major increases in trust and participation.

STEP 7: Implement High-Impact Family Engagement Activities

The **Parent Activity Handbook** and “150 Days of Family Engagement” resources provide schools with year-round engagement opportunities. <https://www.projectappleseed.org/activities>

Examples Include:

- Family literacy nights
- Volunteer opportunities
- Parent workshops
- Student showcases
- Community celebrations
- Attendance campaigns
- Reading initiatives
- Family learning challenges

Important:

Focus on activities connected to student learning and relationship-building—not just attendance numbers.

Schools should create a yearly family engagement calendar that includes:

- Monthly engagement goals
- Seasonal events
- Volunteer opportunities
- Community partnerships
- Recognition activities



STEP 8: Celebrate National Family Engagement Events

Project Appleseed encourages schools to participate in national engagement celebrations including:



- **National Parental Involvement Day** -Third Thursday in November during American Education Week <https://www.projectappleseed.org/national-parent-day>
- **Public School Volunteer Week** – Third full week in April during National Volunteer Week <https://www.projectappleseed.org/public-school-volunteer-week>

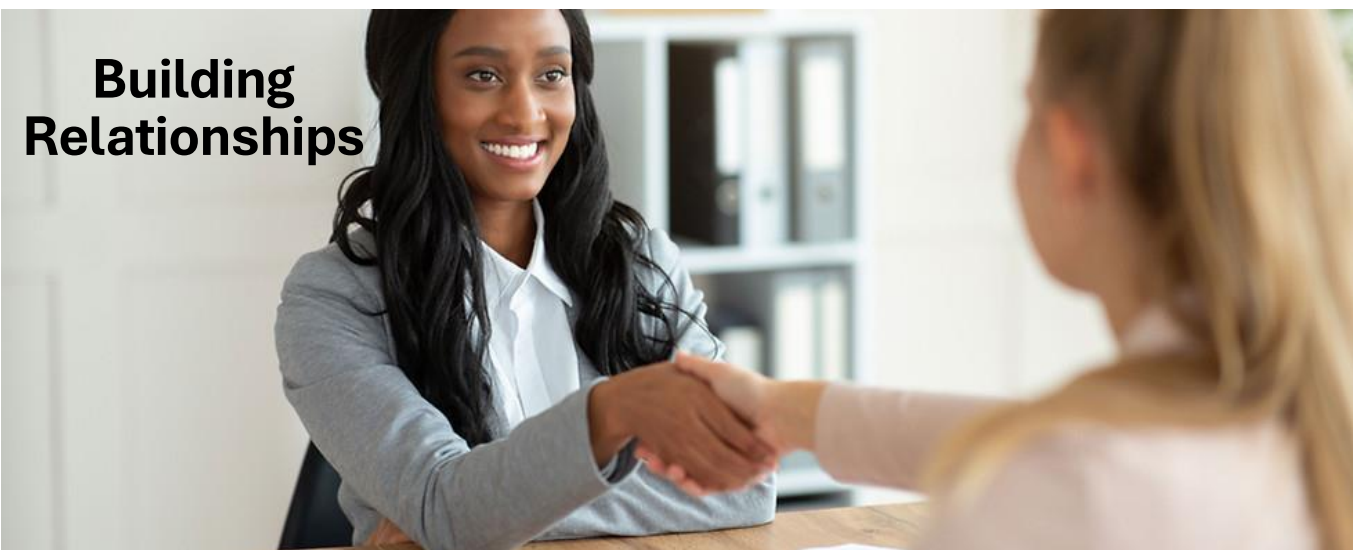
These events help schools:

- Recruit volunteers
- Recognize families
- Build momentum
- Increase visibility
- Strengthen community pride

Suggested Strategies:

- Host assemblies or breakfasts
- Honor volunteers publicly
- Invite community leaders
- Share student performances
- Promote events through multiple communication channels

Celebration creates energy and helps engagement become part of school culture.



STEP 9: Improve Communication Systems

Strong communication is essential for family engagement success. <https://www.projectappleseed.org/family-schoolcommunication>

Schools Should:

- Use multiple communication methods
- Provide translation services
- Communicate consistently
- Avoid educational jargon
- Share positive news regularly
- Create opportunities for two-way dialogue

Recommended Channels:

- Phone calls
- Email
- Text messaging
- Social media
- Printed flyers
- Family newsletters
- School websites
- Home visits when appropriate

Communication should be proactive, respectful, and **relationship centered**

STEP 10: Build Long-Term Sustainability

Family engagement should become part of the school improvement process—not a one-time initiative.

<https://www.projectappleseed.org/instructions>

To Sustain Success:

- Write a **Family Engagement Plan** using the **Strategy Mapper** and **Action Planner** tools provided in the Toolbox
- Include engagement goals in school improvement plans
- Train new staff annually
- Review data regularly
- Celebrate progress
- Continue collecting family feedback
- Align engagement with academic goals



Measure:

- Participation rates
- Volunteer hours
- Survey responses
- Family satisfaction
- Attendance improvements
- Student outcomes

Family Engagement Action Plan					
Strategy		School Year			
School or School District		Team Members			
Six Slice Category	Action/Activity/Policy	Steps	By When	When	Progress
1. Welcoming All Families					
2. Communicate Effectively					

Consistent systems create lasting impact.

Recommended Implementation Timeline

Phase 1: Preparation (Months 1–2)

- Form leadership team
- Review Toolbox materials
- Conduct needs assessment
- Introduce Six Slices framework

Phase 3: Expansion (Months 5–8)

- Implement family events
- Build community partnerships
- Increase volunteer recruitment
- Celebrate engagement milestones

Phase 2: Launch (Months 3–4)

- Distribute Parent Engagement Pledge & Report Card to all families
- Begin engagement activities
- Conduct Red Carpet walkthrough
- Improve communication systems

Phase 4: Sustainability (Ongoing)

- Evaluate progress
- Refine strategies
- Continue staff training
- Embed engagement into school culture



Key Principles for Success

Successful family engagement programs:

- Treat families as partners
- Focus on relationships
- Remove participation barriers
- Welcome every family
- Connect engagement to student learning
- Build trust through consistency
- Celebrate family strengths

Final Thought

The Family Engagement Toolbox is not simply a collection of activities—it is a framework for building a culture where families, educators, students, and communities work together to support student success.

When schools intentionally organize engagement efforts, communicate effectively, and create welcoming environments, families become powerful partners in improving outcomes for every child.

Do you need access to your Toolbox? Email headquarters@projectappleseed.org.



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