

WELCOME, HONOR, AND RESPECT:

**LIFTING UP FAMILY
AND STUDENT
VOICES**



October 5, 2022

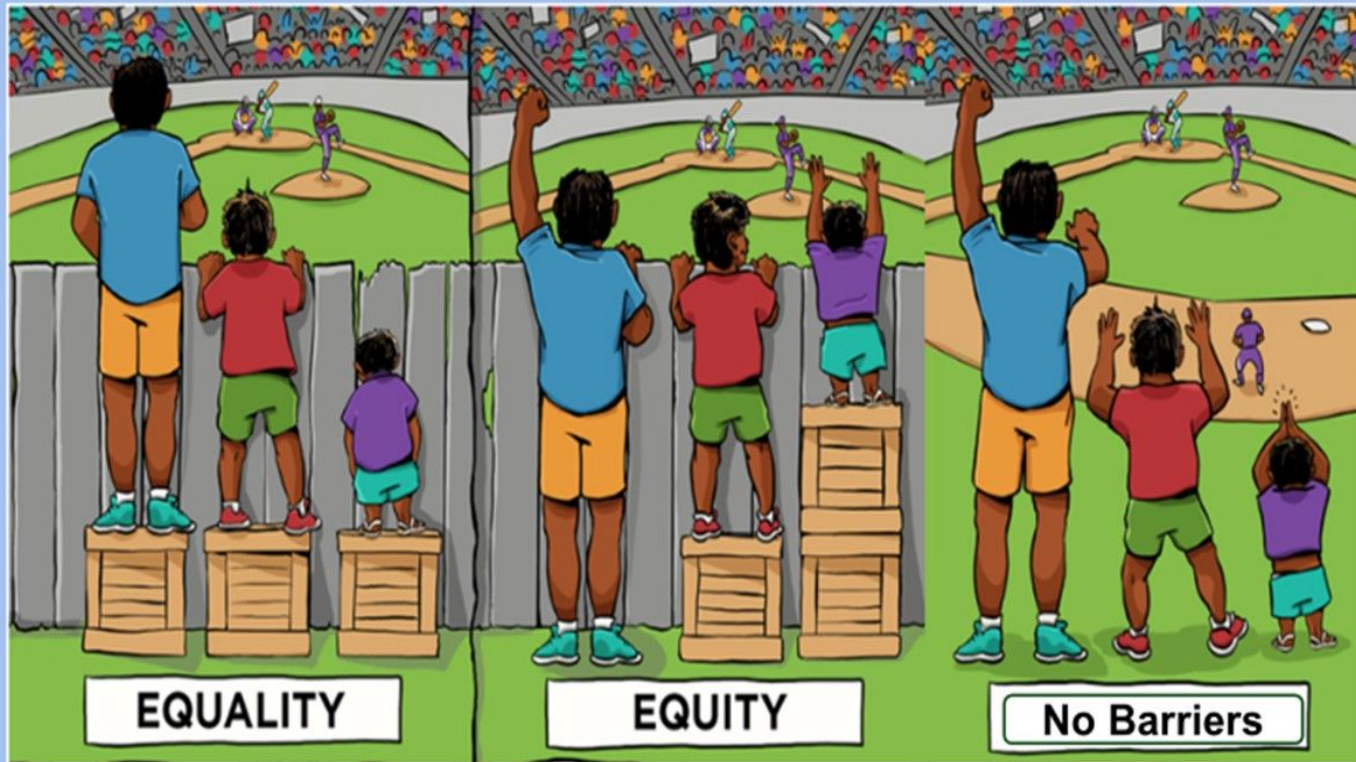
Objectives

Learn about family engagement research that points to better outcomes for students when families are effectively engaged.

Identify at least one example of an evidence-based strategy or practice that school staff can use to elevate student and family voice.

Identify strategies that families and students can use to share their thoughts and ideas, and lift their voices to be heard.

Educational Equity



Every Child a Graduate, College and Career Ready



OUR MISSION: Educational Equity—every student has what they need to learn when they need it.

FIVE FOCUS AREAS:



Effective Instruction

Each student is taught by teachers using high-quality, standards-aligned, culturally responsive materials and practices.



School and Instructional Leadership

Each student's needs are met in schools led by high quality and effective educators.



Family and Community Engagement

Each student attends a school that authentically engages with families, communities, and libraries.



Safe and Supported Students

Each student learns in an environment that promotes social, emotional, and physical well-being and removes barriers to learning.



Meaningful Relationships with Students

Each student has meaningful connections with at least one adult in their school.



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Candice Kieffer Taylor, State Superintendent

CCR-IEP Five Beliefs

- ❑ **High Expectations**
- ❑ **Culturally Responsive Practices**
- ❑ **Student Relationships**
- ❑ **Family and Community Engagement**
- ❑ **Collective Responsibility**

[Every Child a Graduate](#)
[CCR IEP Five Beliefs](#)

Family Engagement = Student Achievement



Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiative

Family Graduation. February 12, 2020.WI TIG. Retrieved from <https://witig.org/video-type/professional-development/>

Why is Family Engagement Important?

Families' involvement in their children's education stands out as one of the greatest predictors of growth and well-being for students with disabilities.

Elliott & Mullins, 2004; Resch et al., 2010

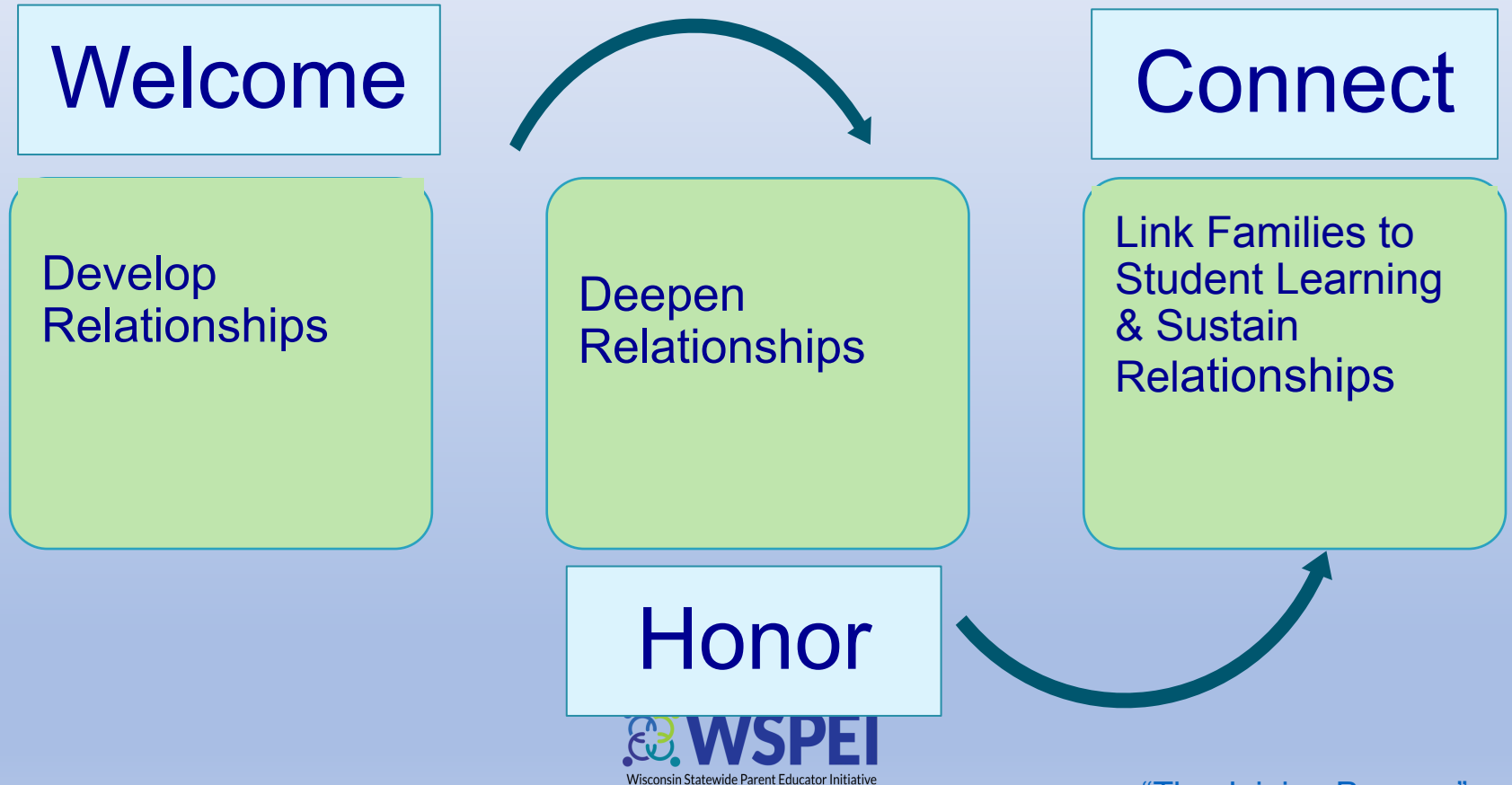


Family-School Partnerships



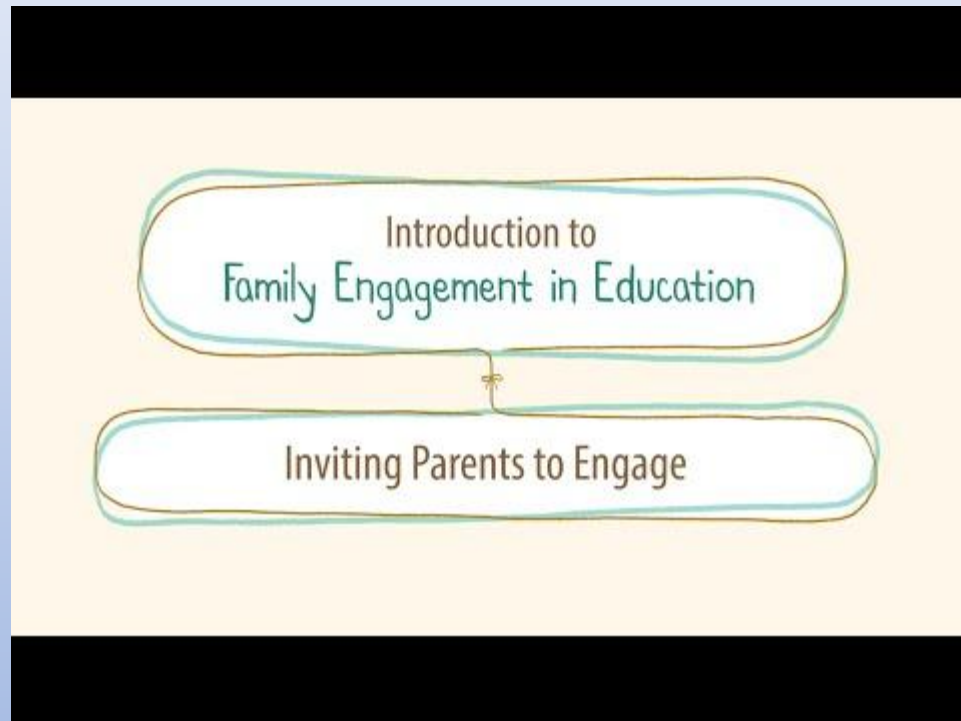
- **Co-Creators**
- **Supporters**
- **Encouragers**
- **Monitors**
- **Advocates**
- **Models**

The Joining Process



"The Joining Process"
between Schools &
Families - Karen Mapp

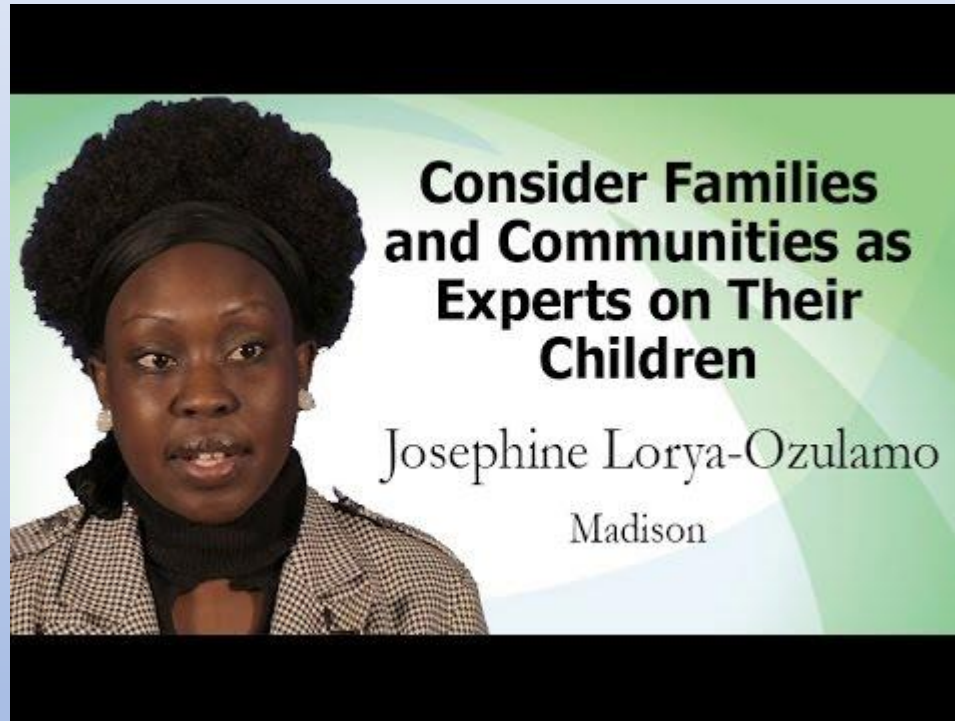
The Joining Process Video



Considerations When Building Relationships with Families

- Do we listen to understand?
- How do we show families we care?
- How do we show families that they can trust us?
- Do we follow through?

Consider Families as Experts Video



Strategies for School Staff

When building relationships with families:

- Smile at parents and students and learn their names
- Let parents know you want to partner with them & discuss with them how they can help
- Get input from the family
- Address their concerns
- Include families in decision making
- Two way communication, in various formats
- Positive communications about the child
- Thank families for their contributions and take time to celebrate!

Engaging Parents in Productive Partnerships

[CADRE - Productive Partnerships](#)



www.directionservice.org/cadre

Engaging Parents in Productive Partnerships



Educators contend with significant pressures resulting from insufficient resources, inadequate professional development opportunities, and an ever-changing landscape of educational initiatives and mandates. Despite such challenges, school staff partner successfully with parents in millions of meetings each year to create appropriate individualized education programs (IEPs) for students who receive special education and related services.

If you invest early in building trusting working relationships with the parents of students in your school, your contacts with each other can be transformed into more positive experiences. Mutually satisfactory interactions can create a shared history that you can draw upon to prevent disagreements and misunderstandings from escalating into conflict, allowing the time and space to find solutions to challenging situations.



IEP teams are intentionally composed of parents, educators, and service providers who bring different expertise to the development of effective educational programs. This diversity may lead to conflict rather than collaboration. Difficult conversations may ensue when you find yourself at odds with your colleagues or with the parents of students attending your school. These difficult conversations can create stress or anger as strong feelings are expressed or left unspoken.

Fortunately, there are things we can do to communicate more effectively when disagreements occur, opinions diverge and strong emotions are present. The skillful integration of team member expertise, whether based upon personal experience or professional training, is a critical factor in designing successful IEPs. The following strategies can go a long way toward resolving disagreements, improving relationships, and producing positive outcomes for students with disabilities.

Help People Be at Their Best

It is both considerate and sensible to schedule and plan meetings so critical members of the team are able to attend and participate fully. This means scheduling meetings at times and locations that are convenient for all participants. Being attentive to this detail can significantly improve the likelihood that everyone who needs to attend will be present and able to focus on the student and his or her needs. It is also important to allow enough time to accomplish the objectives of the meeting. Otherwise, discussions and decision-making may be disjointed or incomplete. Sometimes the use of scheduling software programs can simplify this task.

Even though we may be physically present in a meeting, all of us experience times when our capacity to engage with others and focus fully on complex problems is limited. We may be troubled by physical conditions (hunger, forgotten medication, plunging nicotine levels, need for a bathroom break, etc.) or pressing issues (cell phone that keeps buzzing with an urgent call, sick child at home, etc.) that adversely affect our ability to concentrate and contribute. At moments during meetings when any participant seems distracted or distressed, a brief break can afford an opportunity to get back on track. Attention to your own needs, as well as those of others, is helpful for the whole team.

PLAN MEETINGS
TO INCLUDE ALL
MEMBERS OF
THE TEAM.



For Families: Strong and Effective Communication

- Two way communication is vital to your child's success.
- Talk to your child about school and classroom projects, homework, and school issues. Show him or her that you are interested.
- Use open-ended questions to find out more information (instead of "yes" or "no" questions).
- Talk to your child's teacher about school and teacher expectations and discuss with your child.
- Let teachers and the school know when you feel you are not being heard.



Family Graduation. February 12, 2020. WI TIG. Retrieved from <https://witig.org/video-type/professional-development/>

Communication Options for Families

Communication Options for Families

Options Available if You Have Questions or Disagree with a Decision of the School

Families and schools have a "built-in" partnership with the child as the focus.

This partnership will grow when parents and school staff work together.

Disagreements may happen, but working together improves your child's education.

What can you do if questions or concerns arise?

- ◊ If concerns arise, families are encouraged to first talk directly with the people involved as soon as possible (see local contacts – ex: your child's teachers, principal, other school administrators)
- ◊ First, call to schedule an informal meeting to discuss the situation
- ◊ Then, prepare for the meeting by making a list of concerns and some possible solutions

What can you do in the meeting?

- ◊ Identify student strengths and acknowledge what is working
- ◊ Identify concerns of families and educators
- ◊ Use active listening in order to understand the other person's perspective
- ◊ Ask questions or restate ideas so the team has a clear understanding
- ◊ Work together to suggest some possible options to resolve the concerns
- ◊ Analyze all of the options to see if you can find areas of agreement Discuss
- ◊ what should happen next

What if concerns are not fully resolved in the meeting?

- ◊ Request a break or ask the IEP team to meet again and consider including additional team members.
- ◊ Call others for suggestions on possible future action (see Communication Options for Families chart).

Problem solving at the school level gives families and school districts more collaborative options on outcomes for children.

Next Steps: What can be done if these attempts at solving problems don't work?

- ◊ **Facilitated IEP:** An option for early conflict resolution Wisconsin has chosen to make available to families and schools. A neutral, trained professional helps the IEP team with the IEP process. <http://www.wsems.us/iep-facilitation>
- ◊ **Mediation:** An option for early conflict resolution available at no cost to families and schools. A mediator helps families and schools work toward resolution on special education conflicts/issues. <http://www.wsems.us/mediation>
- ◊ **IDEA State Complaints:** Anyone who believes a school district violated state or federal special education law has the right to file a complaint with DPI. More information at: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/dispute-resolution/complain>
- ◊ **Due Process Hearings:** Parents, adult students, and schools districts have the right to request due process hearings for special education disputes. More information at: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/dispute-resolution/due-process>

Access to WSPEI Family Engagement Coordinators and the WI Mediation System are provided at no cost to parents.

CESA – Cooperative Educational Service Agency
DPI – Department of Public Instruction

IEP – Individualized Education Program
WSPEI – Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiative

Developed 2011 – Revised 06/2019

WSPEI Information can be found at: www.wspei.org

The contents of this product were developed under a grant from the Department of Education, CFDA (84.027), through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WI DPI). WSPEI acknowledges WDPI support for this federally funded grant resource.



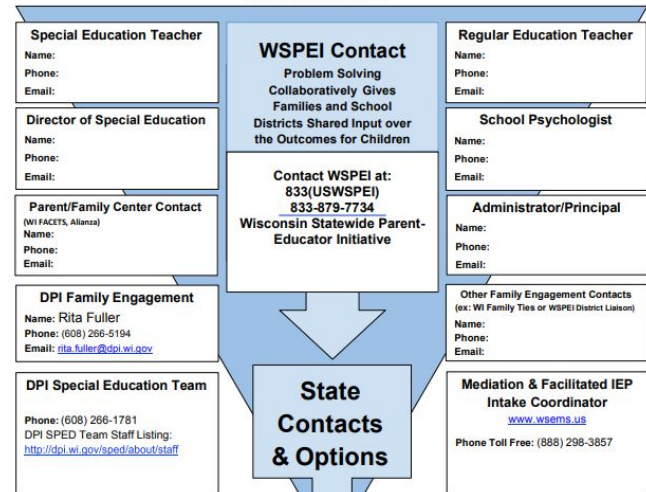
School District:

Communication Options for Families

Options Available if You Have Questions or Disagree with a Decision of the School

Student Name _____

Who Can I Talk To?



Developed by WSPEI, 2011 – Revised 06/2019

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Communication Options for Families

Steps to Success: Communicating With Your Child's School


[CADRE - Steps to
Success](#)

 **WSPEI**
Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiative



CADRE
the center for appropriate dispute
resolution in special education

**Steps to Success:
Communicating with
Your Child's School**

CADRE is funded by

Office of Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education

If you have a child who is receiving special education services, you're more than likely to be very involved with your child's school and teachers — including planning, reviewing, and assessing your child's educational program. Over time, you will learn a lot about the special education process and how to communicate and negotiate on your child's behalf. While your knowledge, skill, and confidence will naturally increase, there are some specific communication skills that can help you be most successful in developing and maintaining a strong partnership with your child's school. We hope these "Steps to Success" will be particularly helpful to parents who are new to the special education process.

For Families: Building Relationships

- Recognize yourself as an important teacher of your child.
- Take advantage of school parent-child activities.
- Build relationships with school staff.
- Share information about your child and family with school staff. You know your child best!



Family Graduation. February 12, 2020. WI TIG. Retrieved from

<https://witig.org/video-type/professional-development/>

Snapshots and Family Profile



Student Snapshot

This form is to be filled out by you, the family, to provide a "snapshot" of your child. You do not have to answer all the questions. The information that you share will help the school know your child better and be used to develop your child's College and Career Ready IEP (*alignment to areas of the CCR IEP in blue italics*). Please describe your child using the questions below.

Child's Name:
Date:

1. Please provide general information about your child, including family members, pets, likes and dislikes, and any other information that you would like to share.
IEP Present Levels, Disability Related Needs, and Transition
2. Highlight your child's strengths in areas of academics, extra-curricular activities, hobbies, and interests - inside and outside of school.
IEP Present Levels
3. What types of literacy activities does your child enjoy? This could be books, audio books, magazines, internet articles, comics, fiction, non-fiction, mystery, etc. Has this changed since you last met with your child's teacher or IEP team?
IEP Present Levels, Disability Related Needs, Goals
4. List successes or accomplishments of your child that you are proud of since you last met with your teacher or IEP team.
IEP Present Levels
5. Please share your concerns about any challenges or difficulties that your child has.
IEP Present Levels, Disability Related Needs, Family Concerns, Goals



My Snapshot

This form can be filled out by you, the student, to provide a snapshot of what you feel is important to share with your IEP team. You do not have to answer all the questions. You can ask others to help you complete this form. The information that you share will help your IEP team to develop, revise, and/or update your College and Career Ready IEP.

My Name:

1. Some things that you should know about me ...
 - a. These are things about my family and friends that will help you understand me better.
 - b. These are things that I like to do in my free time.
 - c. These are my least favorite things.
2. My strengths or things I do well
 - a. In school
 - b. At home
3. What I like to read and why
 - a. When I like to read and why
 - b. Where I like to read and why

Learning About Your Family

Our school believes families are partners in their child's education. We value the strengths and uniqueness of each family. To help us learn more about your family, we invite you to complete this form.

This information may be shared with school staff who work with your child. It may be taken into consideration when teaching/supporting and providing learning opportunities for your child. Please answer only the sections you feel comfortable completing.

<i>Family Members/Extended Family Members or those who have a strong connection with your child</i>	<i>Family Photo or have your child draw a picture of your family</i>
<i>What your family enjoys</i>	<i>Your family's strengths and things you are most proud of</i>
<i>What is the best way to communicate with your family?</i>	

For Families: Engage in Learning

- Ask teachers for ways to better support the learning that is happening in the classroom.
- What support can you provide at home?
- Provide experiences for children that support learning.
- Take advantage of sharing information and learning within everyday routines and experiences (e.g., mapping the bus route, buying groceries, cooking meals).

Your Engagement Matters!



- Families impact the individual child's learning!
- True partnership is a process rather than an event!

Resources

- Edutopia [20 Tips for Developing Positive Relationships with Parents](#)
- WSPEI [Student Snapshots & Family Profile](#)
- WSPEI [Communication Options for Families](#)
- [CADRE - Engaging Parents in Productive Partnerships](#)
- CADRE [Steps to Success: Communicating with Your Child's School](#)

Resources

- **WI Statewide Parent-Educator Initiative**
- **WI Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support**
- **WI Dept. of Public Instruction Family Resources for Learning**
- **WI Dept. of Public Instruction Special Education Family Engagement**

QUESTIONS?

Contact Information

Cheri Sylla

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Coaching Coordinator
csylla@cesa1.k12.wi.us**

**WSPEI Statewide Phone Support
833-879-7734
or email
WSPEI@cesa12.org**

