



Somerville Family Learning Collaborative

Family Engagement Educator Guide

Tips and Tools for
Home-School Partnerships Focused on
Student Learning and Well-Being



Written and compiled by Meghan Bouchard, SFLC Liaison Program Coordinator

About the Somerville Family Learning Collaborative

The Somerville Family Learning Collaborative (SFLC), the Family and Community Engagement Department of the Somerville Public Schools, works to enhance the capacity of families and schools to support children's learning and well-being by promoting welcoming, responsive schools and programs and collaborating with community partners.

Research shows . . .

When parents and school staff work together to support learning, students:

- Adapt better to school and attend more regularly
- Have better social skills and behavior
- Graduate and go on to higher education
- Earn higher grades and test scores
- Enroll in higher level programs
- Are promoted more and earn more credits

The SFLC believes . . .

- ALL parents are engaged in their children's education in a variety of ways (not always visible in schools)
- Parents want avenues to engage further in their children's education
- There is variation in parents' empowerment and capacity for advocacy in communities
- Family engagement is a shared responsibility in school communities

The SFLC knows . . .

Educators work hard to engage families and may need support to:

- Welcome every family in our schools
- Build trusting relationships with families
- Partner with families to support student learning
- Work with families to problem solve issues together
- Keep families informed about student progress, activities, and events at school



To enhance the capacity of families to support children's learning and well-being, we offer programs and services for families and children, birth to adulthood:

- Somerville New Parents Support Group (b - 12 months)
- SomerBaby (home visits and support, b - 6 months)
- Wondering Together (playgroup and support, 12 - 24 months)
- Parent Child Home Program (2.5 - 4 years)
- Playgroups (b - 5 years)
- Sharing Our Stories (for families with young children with special needs)
- Family Events and Workshops
- Multilingual Services
- Parent/Guardian English Classes (for SPS families)
- Student Enrollment Services
- School-based Family and Community Liaisons
- SPS Volunteer Program
- Resources and Referrals

To enhance the capacity of educators and Somerville Public Schools staff to support student learning and well-being, we offer programs and services such as:

- School-based Family and Community Liaisons
- Multilingual Services
- Family Events and Workshops
- Parent/Guardian English Classes (for SPS families)
- SPS Volunteer Program and School-based Volunteer Coordinators
- Scheduling support for Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Outreach to "hard-to-reach" families
- Resources and referrals for school and community programming, i.e. afterschool, summer programs and activities, recreation, and more.
- Resources and referrals for community resources, i.e. food, clothing, housing, and more.

Family in the Community

Leadership & Advocacy

Teaching & Learning

Whole Child

For more information about the SFLC, please visit www.somerville.k12.ma.us/families. SFLC programs and services are planned with fidelity according to our four-strand framework above. Calendars are emailed monthly, and multilingual flyers are emailed and distributed two weeks before all SFLC events.

We hope this guide and the following tips and tools serve as a resource for all Somerville Public Schools staff and supports educators in their efforts to develop and show evidence of home-school partnerships that support student learning and well-being.

Engage

III-A-1 Exemplary

Engaging families starts with building relationships. In a city as linguistically, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse as Somerville, welcoming all families and encouraging partnership in supporting student learning in an equitable way is not always easy. Whether volunteering, chaperoning a field trip, attending Parent-Teacher Conferences, or monitoring homework in the home, being engaged means different things to different families. Time, language capacity, and feelings of self-efficacy can be barriers to attempts at making home-school connections for families and staff alike. What ways of engaging families have you found to be the most effective and impactful? What translation and interpretation supports do you and your families need to best communicate and develop partnership? What type of information do you need from families to best serve all learners? And what opportunities (volunteer, leadership, etc.) are available to families in your classroom and in your school that help to support your work and the school at large to help build a strong learning community?

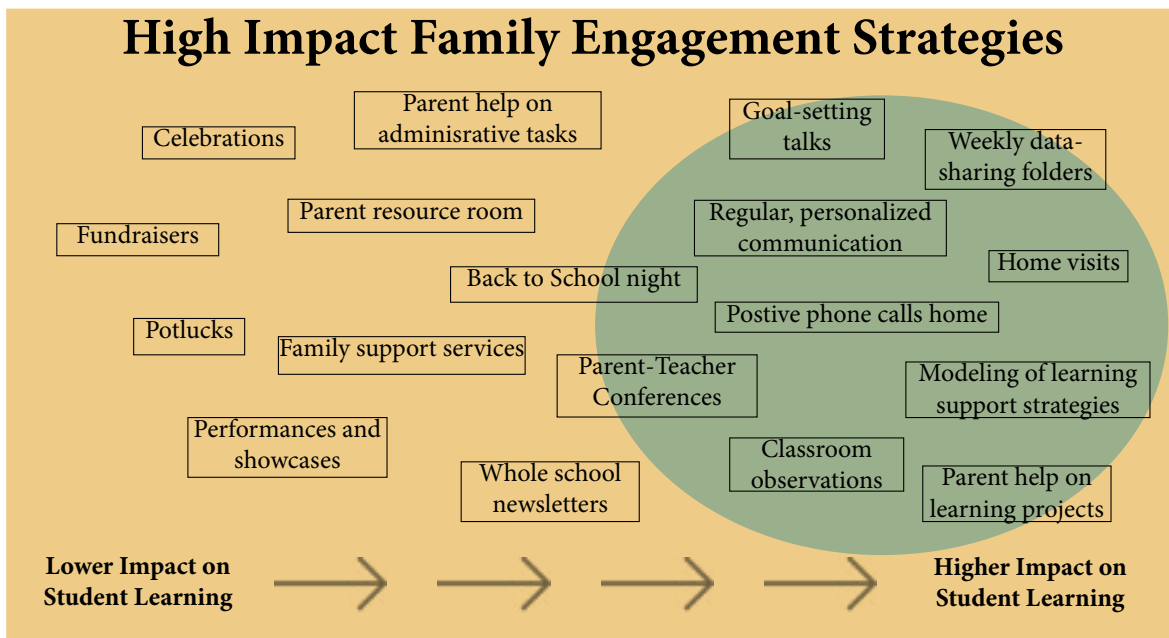
Successfully engages most families and sustains their active and appropriate participation in the classroom and school

Tips

- Start the year off right by making positive contact with all families. Find out from families what is the most effective way to communicate with them and what they want you to know about their student's strengths, hopes, and interests.
- Invite partnership by welcoming parents to Back-to-School Nights, Parent-Teacher Conferences as well as classroom-based activities that showcase student learning. Use these opportunities to help parents understand how to support learning at home and use other face-to-face meeting times like drop-off and dismissal to build relationships and make connections in a more informal way.
- Encourage participation in district and school-based groups: invite parents to be a part of the PTA, School Improvement Councils, and the Somerville Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SSEPAC). Refer families to SFLC programs that you think may fit their needs.

Tools

- Welcome all families to the new school year in their preferred language by using the [Welcome Note template](#) (included in this guide) offered in four languages.
- Call or write a note home along with an [SFLC, Somerville Special Education Parent Advisory Council \(SSEPAC\)](#), or a [Parent Teacher Association \(PTA\) flyer](#) to invite a family to an activity or event you think is particularly relevant for them.
- Ask your [Family and Community Liaison](#) to help plan family engagement events that are linked to learning and to assist with outreach to families.
- Develop your own system of engaging families that invites them to be a part of student learning in the classroom such as monthly read-a-louds (to read or participate as a listener), helping with hands-on-projects, or sharing a hobby, skill, cultural tradition, or family interest.
- Refer families to www.somervillehub.org for information about activities, events and resources for children, teens and families in Somerville.



*Graphic adapted from Flamboyant Foundation

Collaborate

In several recent SFLC home-school surveys, with more than 1,600 multilingual parent/guardian responses, the message we receive from families across schools, languages, and grade-levels is consistent: families love and respect their children's teachers, they want to partner with their children's teachers, and many parents want more information to help them support learning at home. Reflecting on your own practice, what types of information do you share with families about learning and behavior expectations that will help enhance the capacity of parents to support students learning and well-being? Are you comfortable sharing student data with families in a way they will understand? What supports do you need to best share this information? Do you have parents/guardians who are comfortable and responsive to your requests to partner in supporting a student? Do you have some who are less receptive? What are ways you can differentiate your approach to certain families in order to improve partnership? And what resources are available to you to do so?

Tips

- Make it two-way: share your expectations for student learning and behavior, but also ask families to share their own.
- Give parents the information they need to best support their child, to monitor homework, student progress, and to talk meaningfully with their children about what they are learning at school.
- Inform parents about and assist them in using technological classroom tools such as X2, Schoology, the Remind app, Classroom Dojo, etc.
- Parent-Teacher Conferences are a great opportunity to share information about grade-level learning standards, support families' understanding of report cards, and provide suggestions for how to best support learning at home.
- When possible, in parent-teacher conversations, provide visual examples. Look at student work together. Show a "just right" book for a child's reading level, what a next-level book looks like, and explain what skills a child needs in order to progress.
- When sharing information with families, be aware of your own use of "eduspeak" and share information in a way that is user-friendly.
- Set goals for student progress *with* families to facilitate shared responsibility in supporting student learning.
- The book *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships* (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, Davies) is a helpful resource that includes family engagement checklists and suggestions, and is available in the SFLC Family Engagement Lending Library. Other titles include *Parents & Teachers Working Together* (Davis and Yang), *Creating Welcoming Schools* (Allen), *Multicultural Partnerships Involve All Families* (Hutchings, Greenfeld, Epstein), and more. For more information or to borrow a title, contact Meghan Bouchard at mbouchard@k12.somerville.ma.us.

Tools

- Check the Somerville Public School Website's Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment page for [Grade Level Curriculum Guides](#), a link to the [Helping Your Child Series](#) from the U.S. Department of Education (also in Spanish), a link to a [parent brochure on STAR Assessments](#) as well as the Early Education page for the Early Education Curriculum.
- For EL Learners, visit WIDA's Download Library (<https://www.wida.us/downloadLibrary.aspx>) for the [Parent Guide to ACCESS for ELLs](#) in 13 different languages.
- Other useful websites:

For [Parent Teacher Conference Tip Sheets](#):

- www.globalfrp.org/Articles/Parent-Teacher-Conference-Tip-Sheets-For-Principals-Teachers-and-Parents

For information about [preparing for Parent Teacher Conferences](#), [positive phone call scripts](#), tools for [shared goal-setting conferences](#), guidelines for good [update letters](#), etc.:

- www.flamboyanfoundation.org/

For effective [data-sharing practices tip sheet](#):

- www.globalfrp.org/Articles/Tips-for-Administrators-Teachers-and-Families-How-to-Share-Data-Effectively

For information about the [Academic Parent Teacher Team model](#) of family engagement and data-sharing:

- www.flamboyanfoundation.org/focus/family-engagement/academic-parent-teacher-teams/
- www.edutopia.org/blog/academic-parent-teacher-teams-anne-obrien

For more general articles and information about linking family engagement to learning:

- www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/14/10/link-it-learning
- www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/15/11/data-dialogue
- www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/15/10/parent-teacher-partnership

III-B-1 Exemplary

Successfully conveys to most parents student learning and behavior expectations. Is able to model this element.

III-B-2 Exemplary

Successfully prompts most families to use one or more of the strategies suggested for supporting learning at school and home and seeks out evidence of their impact. Is able to model this element.

Communicate

Strong communication practices are essential for engaging parents/guardians as partners to support student learning. Families can support classroom and school efforts only if they are informed about what is happening with their child. Also, family engagement efforts are inclusive and equitable only if the parent/guardians reached fairly represent the demographics of the school community. This can happen with ongoing home-school communication that is supported by the district's resources for reaching all families. Not all parent/guardians respond to the same strategies- one parent/guardian may be very involved with the PTA while another is able to take a day off from work to chaperone a field trip and another attends Parent-Teacher Conferences when they can depending on a work schedule that includes more than one job. Like students, parents/guardians' needs, experiences, learning and interaction styles vary. Ways to involve families must be differentiated to best develop partnerships that support all learners- but first and foremost, positive two-way communication lays the foundation for working together. When families and staff engage in two-way communication that is mutually respectful, culturally sensitive, and helps to build a trusting relationship, a strong foundation is built that supports student learning and well-being.

III-C-1 Exemplary

Regularly uses a two-way system that supports frequent, proactive and personalized communication with families about student performance and learning. Is able to model this element.

III-C-2 Exemplary

Always communicates respectfully with families and demonstrates understanding and appreciation of different families' home language, culture, and values. Is able to model this element.

Tips

- Ask parent/guardians what communication methods work best for them.
- Consider a weekly or monthly calendar or newsletter that lets families know about activities, events and topics covered in class. Use language that is understandable and accessible to all.
- If you use online communication such as blogs and emails, be aware that these modes of communication may not be accessible to all families and differentiate accordingly.
- Begin and end your communication with parents/guardians with positive news. Whether it is a phone call, a note home, or an email, when parents feel you care about their child, partnerships are easier to build.
- Disagreements between parents/guardians and staff may happen. Model maintaining a focus on the best interests of the child and work with a family to problem solve when issues arise.
- Do you and a family not share a common language? Use a translator or interpreter to help overcome language barriers and to communicate most effectively.
- Work schedules, commitments and flexibility vary from family to family. Give parents/guardians as much advanced notice as possible for school and classroom events and activities.
- Be specific and intentional in your communication with families. What is your goal? Better attendance? Increased student engagement? Consult with parents and invite dialogue in order to work together.

Tools

- Use the [SFLC Communications Preference template](#) (included in this guide) to solicit family feedback about best ways to keep in touch.
- Check out www.readingrockets.org for an editable monthly classroom newsletter template, including Parent/Guardian reading tips (available in 11 languages).
- Talk to your principal or [SFLC Family and Community Liaison](#) about how to access Multilingual Services for translation and interpretation needs.
- Check out the Staff Intranet under “[Translations, etc.](#)” for translated templates for engagement activities and communications to families. Or, if you create your own, talk to your [SFLC Family and Community Liaison](#) for help in keeping your invitation clear, culturally relevant and accessible to all families.
- When planning a classroom activity and inviting parents, use the [SFLC Save the Date template](#) (included in this guide) to give families time to plan ahead.
- Use a Room Parent or go-to helper to extend your outreach via email or face-to-face on the playground.
- Newton Public Schools have a [Home Communication Templates collection](#), which includes Chinese and other low-incident languages, easily accessible at www.newton.k12.ma.us/Page/2694.
- Use the [SFLC Family Talk](#) campaign logo (available on Family Talk page of SFLC website: <http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/families>) on print communications to promote families talking with their children about learning and the importance of education.



Templates and Translations

These templates and translations, as well as translated templates in the staff Intranet under “Translations, etc.”, are meant for school staff to communicate with families in a language they prefer. For English Language Learner-specific translated parent notifications, visit www.ellsomerville.weebly.com.

WELCOME NOTE: English

Dear Families:

I hope that you are well. I am very excited to be your child's _____ grade teacher this year.

I believe that good communication is the key to a successful school year. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me anytime. You can send me a note or an e-mail (_____) or you can call me at (617) 625-6600 xXXXX.

This year I will be sending home information about the curriculum and expectations for _____ grade. Please be sure to review this information with your child.

I hope to have a wonderful and exciting year working with you and your child. I look forward to seeing you in September.

Sincerely,

_____ grade teacher

WELCOME NOTE: Spanish

Estimadas Familias:

Espero que se encuentren bien. Estoy muy emocionada ser la maestra del ____ grado de su hijo/a.

Creo que la clave para un año exitoso es buena comunicación. Si tienen cualquier pregunta o duda, favor de comunicarse conmigo en cualquier momento. Me pueden enviar una nota, un correo electrónico (_____) o me pueden llamar al (617) 625-6600 x XXXX.

Este año voy a enviar información sobre el plan de estudios y las expectativas para su hijo/a en _____ grado. Favor de repasar esta información con su hijo/a.

Espero tener un año maravilloso y emocionante trabajando junto con ustedes. Nos veremos en septiembre.

Atentamente,

Maestro/a del _____ grado

WELCOME NOTE: Portuguese

Prezadas famílias:

Espero que se encontrem bem. Estou muito contente em ser a professora do _____ ano de seu/sua filho/a.

Acredito que o essencial para um ano cheio de sucesso começa com boa comunicação. Se em qualquer momento tiverem perguntas ou alguma dúvida, por favor se comuniquem comigo. Vocês podem me enviar um recado ou um email para o meu endereço eletrônico (_____) ou podem me ligar no número (617) 625-6600 x XXXX.

Este ano vou lhes enviar todas as informações sobre o plano de estudo e as expectativas para seu filho/a no _____ ano. Por favor reveja estas informações com seu filho/a.

Espero que trabalhando juntos tenhamos um ano escolar maravilhoso. Nos veremos em setembro

Cordialmente,

Professor/a da _____ série

WELCOME NOTE: Haitian Creole

Chè Fanmi:

Mwen espere nou byen. Mwen trè eksite pou'm pwofesè klas _____ pitit ou yo ane sa - a.

Mwen kwè ke bon komunikasyon se kle siksè pou ane eskolè a. Si ou genyen nenpòt keksyon pa ezite kontakte' m a nenpòt lè. Ou ka voye yon nòt oubyen

e-mail mwen(_____) oubyen ou kapab rele m nan (617) 625-6600 xXXXX.

Ane sala m'ap voye lakay nou enfòmasyon sou kourikoulòm ak espektasyon pou _____ klas. Tanpri nou vle asire ou revize enfòmasyon sa-yo avèk pitit ou a.

Mwen espere ou pase yon bon ane enteresan travay oumemem ak pitit ou a. Mwen paka tann pou m rankontre ou an Sek-tanm.

Sensèman,

_____ klas pwofesè

<u>English</u>	<u>Spanish</u>	<u>Portuguese</u>	<u>Haitian Creole</u>
• Monday	• lunes	• segunda-feira	• Lendi
• Tuesday	• martes	• terça-feira	• Madi
• Wednesday	• miércoles	• quarta-feira	• Mèkredi
• Thursday	• jueves	• quinta-feira	• Jedi
• Friday	• viernes	• sexta-feira	• Vandredi
• September	• septiembre	• setembro	• Septanm
• October	• octubre	• outubro	• Oktòb
• November	• de noviembre	• novembro	• Novanm
• December	• diciembre	• dezembro	• Desanm
• January	• enero	• janeiro	• Janvyè
• February	• febrero	• fevereiro	• Fevriye
• March	• marzo	• março	• Mas
• April	• abril	• abril	• Avril
• May	• mayo	• maio	• Me
• June	• junio	• junho	• Jen
• July	• julio	• julho	• Jiyè
• August	• agosto	• agosto	• Out
• and	• y	• e	• ak
• You are invited!	• ¡Usted está invitado!	• Você está convidado!	• Nou envite!
• Save the date	• Reserve la fecha	• Salvar a data	• Sere dat la
• Where?	• ¿Dónde?	• Onde?	• Ki Kote?
• Location:	• Lugar:	• Local:	• Lkal:
• When?	• ¿Cuándo?	• Quando?	• Lè?
• Family Breakfast	• Un especial Desayuno Familiar	• Café Especial para Famílias	• Dejene Fanmi
• Field Trip	• Excursion	• Passeio	• Vwayaj
• Parent-Teacher Conferences	• Conferencias de Padres y Maestros	• Reunião de Pais e Professores	• Konferans Pwofesè Paran
• Student Learning Showcase	• Presentacion de lo que Hemos Aprendido	• Apresentação do aprendizado dos estudantes	• Elèv Aprantisaj Ekspozisyon

Dear Parent/Guardians,
We believe that parent/guardian-teacher communication is important for student success. Please take a few minutes to let us know about your schedule and communication preferences. Thanks!

Queridos Padres de Familia,
Creemos que la comunicación con los padres es crucial para que los estudiantes tengan éxito escolar. Por favor tómese unos minutos para hacernos saber la mejor forma de comunicarnos con usted(s). ¡Gracias!

Prezadas Famílias,
Nós acreditamos que a comunicação com os pais é fundamental para que os alunos tenham êxito escolar. Por favor, deixe-nos saber qual a melhor forma de comunicar com você(s). Obrigado!

Student name: Nombre del Estudiante: Nome do Aluno:

Parent/Guardian 1 • Padre/Madre o Responsable 1
Pai/Mãe ou Responsável 1

Name/Nombre/Nome: _____

Relation/Relación con el Estudiante/ Relação com o Aluno: _____

Please check the best ways I can reach you:
Por favor háganos saber la mejor manera de contactarlos:
Melhor forma de contato:

Home phone/Teléfono de la Casa/Telefone Residencial:

What is the best time to call you at home? Mejor hora de contactarlo/a en casa? Melhor hora de contatar em casa: _____

Cell phone/ Teléfono Celular/ Telefone Celular:

What is the best time to call your cell? Mejor hora de contactar lo/ a en su celular? Melhor hora de contatar no celular? _____

Can I send a text message? Podemos enviarle mensajes de texto? Podemos enviar mensagem de texto?
 Yes Si Sim No Não

Work phone:/ Teléfono del Trabajo/ Telefone do Trabalho:

Only call me at work if absolutely necessary/ Llamarme únicamente si es absolutamente necesario/Me telefonar somente se for absolutamente necessário.

Email address/ Correo Electrónico/ Email:

Do you check email at least once a day/Revisa su correo al menos una vez al día/Você vê seu email pelo menos uma vez por dia?
 Yes Si Sim No Não

Language(s) you speak/ Qué idiomas habla/Você fala outros idioma? _____

May I contact you to volunteer with our class? Puedo contactarlo para voluntarear en la clase? Posso contatar vocês para voluntariar em classe?
 Yes Si Sim No Não

Parent/Guardian 2 • Padre/Madre o Responsable 2
Pai/Mãe ou Responsável 2

Name/Nombre/Nome: _____

Relation/Relación con el Estudiante/ Relação com o Aluno: _____

Please check the best ways I can reach you:
Por favor háganos saber la mejor manera de contactarlos:
Melhor forma de contato:

Home phone/Teléfono de la Casa/Telefone Residencial:

What is the best time to call you at home? Mejor hora de contactarlo/a en casa? Melhor hora de contatar em casa: _____

Cell phone/ Teléfono Celular/ Telefone Celular:

What is the best time to call your cell? Mejor hora de contactar lo/ a en su celular? Melhor hora de contatar no celular? _____

Can I send a text message? Podemos enviarle mensajes de texto? Podemos enviar mensagem de texto?
 Yes Si Sim No Não

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Email address/ Correo Electrónico/ Email:

Do you check email at least once a day/Revisa su correo al menos una vez al día/Você vê seu email pelo menos uma vez por dia?
 Yes Si Sim No Não

Language(s) you speak/ Qué idiomas habla/Você fala outros idioma? _____

May I contact you to volunteer with our class? Puedo contactarlo para voluntarear en la clase? Posso contatar vocês para voluntariar em classe?
 Yes Si Sim No Não

Save the Date! Reserve la fecha! Salvar a data! Sere dat la!

Dear families, Estimadas familias, Estimadas famílias, Chè fanmi,
You are invited! ¡Usted está invitado! Você está convidado! Nou envite!

When? ¿Cuándo? Quando? Lè? _____

Where? ¿Dónde? Onde? Ki Kote? _____

Thank you. Gracias. Obrigado. Merci,



Save the Date! Reserve la fecha! Salvar a data! Sere dat la!

Dear Families, Estimadas familias, Estimadas famílias, Chè fanmi,
You are invited! ¡Usted está invitado! Você está convidado! Nou envite!

When? ¿Cuándo? Quando? Lè? _____

Where? ¿Dónde? Onde? Ki Kote? _____

Thank you. Gracias. Obrigado. Merci,

