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Family Engagement: Making Connections with VTmtss

Purpose

This document is intended to be used by school systems who are reviewing and improving their Family Engagement. This document would be most effective when used in conjunction with the VTmtss Systems Screener, the VTmtss Framework, and with the VTmtss Driver Diagram as an organizational tool for action planning.

Terms within this document:

- **Performance Indicator (PI) Categories** are the essential elements that represent what effective Family Engagement should include. These categories were taken from Family Engagement Core Principles.

- **Performance Indicators** begin to describe what a school system would want to realize, within each PI category. (See the Family Engagement Toolkit and Self-Assessment.)

- **Effective Practices** are examples of what best practice within each Performance Indicator.

- **Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component Indicators** are the VTmtss Framework Component (its corresponding characteristic and indicators located within the component tab of the VTmtss Driver Diagram) to support family engagement improvement conversations: Systemic and Comprehensive Approach (SCA), Effective Collaboration (EC), High-quality Instruction and Intervention (HQII), Balanced and Comprehensive Assessment System (CBAS), and Expertise (E).

If a school system has identified improving their Family Engagement as a priority, this is how they should use this document:

1. Complete the VTmtss Systems Screener to help your school system articulate its systemic strengths and areas for improvement and inform how you approach your family engagement improvement work.

2. Decide which PI Category(ies) to focus on in your improvement work.

3. Use the VTmtss Driver Diagram to frame your action planning around your selected Category(ies).

   a. Use the Performance Indicators and Effective Practices as reference points for what you should be working towards.

   b. Focus on the Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component Indicators within your VTmtss Driver Diagram conversation, to help guide the direction of your action planning.

If you have questions about this document or this process, please contact Nancy Hellen, at nancy.hellen@vermont.gov.

PI CATEGORY 1: THE SCHOOL'S ENVIRONMENT IS WELCOMING FOR FAMILIES

Performance Indicator	What does effective practice look like?	Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component Indicators
The school has a culture of a welcoming environment.	• Families entering the school are greeted personally, have a clear sense of where to go, and find the overall environment inviting. • Information about school and community programs related to child and family needs is available in common areas for families. • An orientation system is established for families new the school, and for middle/high school transition, which includes home visits and pre-welcome before the first day of school to learn the layout of the school and meet team members. • Communication with families including automated calls and emails as well as signs and postings around the school reflect the languages spoken by families in your school.	***Effective Collaboration****: (characteristic #2, indicator #1)* There are purposeful collaborations formed to meet specific needs, have defined norms, roles, responsibilities, and processes.

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Performance Indicator	What does effective practice look like?	Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component Indicators
There is a focus on relationship and opportunities for all families.	• Families have a trusting relationship with one or more school staff members and feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions. • School activities for families are designed with the individual needs and interests of all families of the school and are unbiased towards the socioeconomic status, culture, language, or ability of the families in the school. • There are opportunities for family members to participate in meaningful volunteer opportunities within the school and there is information and guidance for teachers to support family volunteers within the school. • There is a regular practice in place of reaching out to families to share 'positive news'. • A positive rapport is built during initial conversations with families regarding additional supports. Families are asked about preferences and needs prior to and during meetings. • There is acknowledgement of the expertise the family brings about their child, and the strengths, perspective, and skills they bring to the school and their child's education. • Staff meetings or professional learning opportunities are used to develop skills for effective family engagement with focus of learning to be mindful of attitudes, beliefs, and values.	***Effective Collaboration****: (characteristic #2, indicator #2 and #3)* School structures support ongoing collaborative engagement focused on improving student outcomes in behavior, academics, and social-emotional learning. There are respectful school-family and school-community partnerships that include participation in decision making, input into improved student learning, and culturally responsive teaching.

PI CATEGORY 2: THERE IS EFFECTIVE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES AND SCHOOL

Performance Indicator	What does effective practice look like?	Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component Indicators
Effective Communication Strategies are in place.	- Schools have a system in place with multiple strategies to facilitate two-way communication with families and community members on a regular basis. - Communication is comprehensive and takes place throughout the year and in different venues. - Communications are respectful, honest, timely, collaborative and event titles are checked for inclusiveness and diversity to reflect the families in your school. - There are guidelines for regular communications between school and home, such as emails, calls, newsletters, digital and online platforms. - During meetings families are checked in with regularly for understanding, empathetic language is used, and nonverbal clues are paid attention to.	***Effective Collaboration***: *(characteristic #3, indicator #2)* School-level assessment data is openly shared with the communities served. ***Comprehensive and Balanced Assessment System***: *(characteristic #3, indicator #1)* Collaborative structures are in place for data discussions on essential standards, common assessments, systemic interventions, and extended learning.
Communication Across Roles is accessible.	- Educators, administrators, and families feel equally able to contact one another in support of a child's learning. - Families, students, and community members are regularly asked for their input regarding issues and concerns. - There is opportunity for families to provide feedback on a regular basis.	***Effective Collaboration***: *(characteristic #2, indicator #2 and #3)* School structures support ongoing collaborative engagement focused on improving student outcomes in behavior, academics, and social-emotional learning. There are respectful school-family and school-community partnerships that include participation in decision making, input into improved student learning, and culturally responsive teaching.

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Performance Indicator	What does effective practice look like?	Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component Indicators
Culturally Proficient Communication is employed.	• Educators have an understanding of how the various cultures represented in their school view education and schooling practices so that they can engage in meaningful conversations with individuals of different backgrounds. • School activities are representative of all families, and families feel safe sharing information about their child, family, culture, or experience to enhance student learning. • Professional development is provided on cultural responsiveness to educational experiences and preferences of various cultures. • There are protocol for meetings including interpreters and/or translators for meaningful participation of family members and meeting norms, which include consideration of cultural preferences of meeting interactions.	***Effective Collaboration:*** ***(characteristic #1, indicator #1)*** There is genuine and mutual respect for the knowledge and skills of participants in all collaborations. ***High Quality Instruction and Intervention:*** ***(characteristic #2, indicator #3)*** All instruction and intervention approaches and supports respond to student need and ensure equity of opportunity and outcome.

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PI CATEGORY 3: THERE IS COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS AND A SCHOOL CULTURE THAT HONORS THAT FAMILIES ARE IMPORTANT

Performance Indicator	What does effective practice look like?	Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component Indicators
Families are engaged as partners in student success.	- Educators and families partner to identify and implement plans and practices that support jointly identified desired outcomes or goals for students. - Families are included throughout the entire IEP development process.	***Effective Collaboration****: (characteristic #2, indicator #2)* School structures support ongoing collaborative engagement focused on improving student outcomes in behavior, academics, and social-emotional learning.
Families' needs are honored.	- Conferences and visits are arranged by the school or as requested by families based on students' individual needs. - Needs based alternatives to support engagement are provided to families such as; transportation, childcare, time of day, food/snacks, laundry facilities, online platform and events held at venues other than school building.	***Effective Collaboration****: (characteristic #2, indicator #3)* There are respectful school-family and school-community partnerships that include participation in decision making, input into improved student learning, and culturally responsive teaching.

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Performance Indicator	What does effective practice look like?	Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component Indicators
Schools build relationship with families that is culturally and family needs-based.	- Educators ask families for information about their child, family, culture, values, norms, beliefs, and/or community to use in classroom planning and understand what families need to support their child's learning. - Families work with teachers, administrators, and other school staff to identify, act on, and achieve their hopes and goals for their child. - Families have information, tools, and training about child development and how to create supportive learning environments outside of school that are linked to what the child is learning in the classroom. - Educators share information that is accessible to families about what is being taught. - Opportunities are provided for families to share what they know and how they understand the world.	***High Quality Instruction and Intervention****: *(characteristic #3, indicator #2)* Instruction promotes engagement and is responsive to the needs of diverse students.

PI CATEGORY 4: POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY IS SHARED WITH FAMILIES

Performance Indicator	What does effective practice look like?	Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component Indicators
There is intentional development of inclusion of families in school leadership.	- Families representative of the school population are engaged in school planning, leadership, and meaningful volunteer opportunities that result in changes and improvements at the school. - Opportunities are available to support the development of family capacity and family leadership and advocacy skills so that families may take a more active role in school and/or district planning. - Opportunities are provided, including a special education family advisory council, for families to connect and share school-related information. - Opportunities are established for stakeholder engagement that represents the school population.	***Effective Collaboration:*** *(characteristic #2, indicator #3)* There are respectful school-family and school-community partnerships that include participation in decision making, input into improved student learning, and culturally responsive teaching. ***Expertise:*** *(characteristic #1, indicator #1)* All educators, staff, family, and community members view themselves as lifelong learners.

Performance Indicator	What does effective practice look like?	Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component Indicators
Information is shared for decision making.	• Families are provided with information on how to understand and make meaning of information provided about their child, including assessment results, so that they can participate in educational decision-making as partners. • Educators and school staff provide families with objective, unbiased information so families can make informed decisions about their child's education, so educators and school staff can support families' decisions. • Families, staff, students, and community members participate in developing, implementing, and evaluating critical school programs.	***Effective Collaboration****: (characteristic #3, indicator #2)* School-level assessment data is openly shared with the communities served.

PI CATEGORY 5: THERE IS EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP TO SUPPORT FAMILIES

Performance Indicator	What does effective practice look like?	Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component Indicators
Community resources are understood by staff.	• Schools identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development. • Educators have knowledge of the community they serve, including the community's needs and available resource. And seek ways to engage with the community. • Opportunities are identified for extended learning out-of-school environments for students to practice skills, learn new skills and meet new people.	***Effective Collaboration:*** *(characteristic #1, indicators #1 and #3)* There is genuine and mutual respect for the knowledge and skills of participants in all collaborations. Administrators share leadership responsibilities and empower others to participate in decision making about substantive issues.
Schools are in partnership with community resources.	• Schools use community resources and connect students and families to community resources that strengthen and support students' learning and well-being. • Community partnerships exist among community health, mental health, social service, and youth organizations, as well as school partners to build peer networks, link families and students with needed services, and support successful transitions for children and their families. • Information on community resources and programs are distributed to families such as summer programs, library resources, community events.	***Comprehensive and Balanced Assessment System:*** *(characteristic #1, indicator #2)* A focus on improving social emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes for all students. *(characteristic #2, indicator #2)* Our system identifies students who need more support, extensions, or challenges.

PI CATEGORY 6: STUDENTS ARE TREATED EQUITABLY AND HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Performance Indicator	What does effective practice look like?	Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component Indicators
Historical and cultural context of families taken into account.	- Educators consider families' historical context, current situation, and their future desires. - The school provides training to staff on communicating with families who are not native English speakers and/or require translation or interpretation services. - A family resource station/room is available with books, handouts, community resources and computer(s) for families to use to look for online resources.	***High Quality Instruction and Intervention****:* *(characteristic #2, indicator #3)* All instruction and intervention approaches and supports respond to student need and ensure equity of opportunity and outcome.
A strength-based approach is incorporated across Family Engagement practices.	- The school ensures that representation on advisory bodies and committees reflects the composition of the student body. - Educators understand the unique characteristics and strengths that families bring to the school so that families can use those strengths to support improved outcomes for students. - Educators understand how culture and background influence people's interactions and can impact how they are or are not engaged with the school.	***Systemic and Comprehensive Approach****:* *(characteristic #3, indicator #1 and #2)* Equity is considered and addressed at every level. We regularly consider the quality and appropriateness of our instruction and intervention. ***High Quality Instruction and Intervention****:* *(characteristic #3, indicator #2)* Instruction promotes engagement and is responsive to the needs of diverse students.

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PI CATEGORY 7: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT INCLUDES INTENTIONAL PLANNING AND EVALUATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Performance Indicator	What does effective practice look like?	Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component Indicators
Family Engagement is part of Continuous Improvement.	• The school has a family engagement action plan that incorporates specific steps and activities, ongoing evaluation, and data analysis to support a cycle of continuous improvement. • Family engagement has been included as a part of the Continuous Improvement Plan at both the school and SU/SD level. • Connections are in place between family engagement activities and other initiatives in your Continuous Improvement Plan. • School staff assess yearly, or more, activities and practices as they reflect the diversity of families in the school population.	***Systemic and Comprehensive Approach:*** *(characteristic #2, indicator #1)* Coherent and comprehensive plan that outlines our approach to developing, implementing, monitoring, and sustaining the VTmtss Framework.

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Performance Indicator	What does effective practice look like?	Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component Indicators
Resources for Family Engagement are equitable.	• The school emphasizes the use of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to create consistent and intentional impact on the school and family connections. • The school ensures that there are adequate resources (both fiscal and personnel) to support meaningful and effective family engagement strategies that have the power to impact student learning and achievement. • There is a family and community engagement framework in place in which activities are coordinated across classrooms, grade levels, schools, SU/SD and supported by state, district, and school leaders.	***Expertise****: (characteristic #3, indicator #2)* Expertise is used flexibly and efficiently to develop, maintain, and employ resources as needed to ensure success for all students.

Resources

Vermont Family Engagement Toolkit and Self-Assessment: The Family Engagement Toolkit and Self-Assessment is a practical guide for educators seeking to develop and maintain growth of school or Supervisory Union/District family engagement work. The Toolkit provides researched-based information, proven strategies, a Self-Assessment to reflect on your own practice, and links to additional tools that can be customized to Supervisory Union/District or school needs.

Vermont Family Engagement Toolkit Introduction: (Video) Introduction to the Vermont Family Engagement Toolkit (13 minutes).

Consolidated Federal Programs Guide to Title I, Part A Parent and Family Engagement (Toolkit) and Title I, Part A: Parent and Family Engagement (Video): Title I, Part A requirements for parent and family engagement, including policies, compacts, annual meetings, and parent involvement activities. An overview of the allowable uses of the Title I PFE set-aside and multiple resources to create an effective PFE program at the LEA and school level.

Parent, Family, and Community Engagement web page: This web page is intended for both families and educators and the partnership fostered to provide an educational system that meets the needs of all. The resources include Agency of Education documents, tools, and available resources from across the agency as well as outside organizations. Highlights include supervisory union and school practices and programs that strengthen family engagement and critical connections within the community and empower families as stakeholders.