



Family & Community Engagement Newsletter



September is for Planning and Health!

Summer might be over but now is the opportune time to start thinking about future summer plans! You might not yet know your goals for summer programs but leveraging information while the experience is fresh in your and your teams mind can help with getting things rolling more effortlessly. Additionally, September is a great time to be preventative. Helping families build healthy routines, strategies, and build awareness to resources is key!



Upcoming Events

September 5

[Board Meeting](#)

September 13

[Back to Basics: Introduction to Family Engagement Virtual Training](#)

1:30 - 5:30 pm

September 14

[Welcoming Week Virtual Event: Strengths-Based Family Engagement](#)

4:00 - 6:00 pm

September 20

[Ohio Family Engagement Leadership Summit](#)

September 27

Book Study Ch. 1-2

[Dealing with Difficult Parents](#)

2:00 - 3:30 pm

Register [here](#)

Parent Powered Family Communication Pilot

The Utah State Board of Education is funding a FREE 2-year pilot program through the Parent Powered program! We are looking for 5 Utah schools who want to improve their family engagement with their evidence-based text messaging program. We'd love for you to consider signing up for the free ParentPowered text messaging curriculum to engage your families!

Click [here](#) to view a 2-minute video preview about how our program works. **Email susie.estrada@schools.utah.gov to enroll!**

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) is Hiring!

The IEL is currently hiring a Director for the Coalition for Community Schools, and Vice President of Place-Based Strategies.

Position is Full-time and fully remote.

Compensation: Salary in the range of \$165,000 - \$200,000 plus benefits.

Learn more [here](#).



Utah State Board of Education

2024-2025 ADULT & SPECIAL EDUCATION VIRTUAL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

September 30 | January 27 | April 21
Online Class
2:30-4:00PM



Explore effective practices and the impacts of special education in adult education settings while coming together with:

- Special educators
- School counselors
- Family and Community Engagement Specialists
- Youth in care programs
- General Educators



Apply and find more information through MIDAS.

Course # 62921



tinyurl.com/4hjbxx6n

The Utah State Board of Education is looking forward to hosting a second Family and Community Engagement Summit!



SAVE THE DATE

April 11, 2025
Family and Community
Engagement Summit

Building Bridges: Strengthening Connections Between Schools & Communities

"Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone."

- George Dei, Professor, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

As schools come back into session, goals are manifesting and strategies are going into play. It is not too late to think through and establish policies that promote the inclusion of students with disabilities, newcomer families, and families from low-income communities.

Across the next few newsletters, we will discuss strategies to engage and include all families while emphasizing the previously three communities that can be most difficult to reach.

As defined by the [National Family Support Network](#), inclusion consist of actions, behaviors, and social norms that ensure all people feel valued, welcomed, and that they belong.

If you can't wait to discuss inclusion of students with disabilities, the USBE's Inclusion Specialist Samantha Segó is a phenomenal resource for you! Please contact them at samantha.sego@schools.utah.gov

GRANT ALERT: PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS

The U.S. Department of Education will be awarding a total of \$4 million for new grants this year. This program is authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA).

This grant intends to support the academic and developmental outcomes of children and youth living in the most distressed communities of the United States including ensuring school readiness, high school graduation, and access to a community-based continuum of high-quality services.

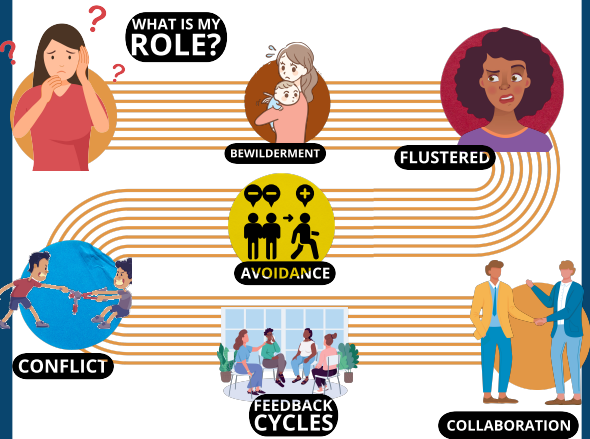
For more information, click [here](#).

Intent to apply is optional.
Application deadline:
09/10/2024

This announcement is informational only. This grant is not awarded, managed or endorsed by the Utah State Board of Education.

From Confusion to Clarity: Strategies for Clear Communication

Before we can dive into strategies for inclusion and engagement, it is necessary to first ensure that clarity is established early on for all families.



For families that are new to your school or families who are adjusting to a new policy in your building, there will need to be a period of adjustment, repetition, and most of all, of consistency.

The above graphic illustrates a path a family could potentially take when engaging with a new school or a new school system or policy. Like all of us, families will try to first understand their role within the school. Establishing clear expectations can happen in many ways.

Some effective ways to clearly communicate your expectations of families to families include:

- Write and post in multiple languages and via easy to find methods online or in printed form your LEA policies outlining what your expectation of families are.
- Provide an orientation for newly enrolled families to your schools throughout the year.
- Connect families to your designated family welcoming committee. This can be your school counselor, school social worker, parent liaison, family engagement specialist, or even another parent.
- Model for your families and your school what your expectations are every day.
- Most importantly, BE CONSISTENT! Be consistent in the way that you show up and in holding people to the standard that you have set.

The following four options are all similar in that they are rooted in the lack of knowledge of resources or the lack of actual resources and supports for families to be successful in meeting the expectations the LEA has of them. With your team, answer the following questions:

- Are the expectations we have of families realistic?
- Are we asking families about their needs and what they can realistically contribute?
- What supports, resources, or partnerships can we leverage to support families in meeting our expectations?
- Do our expectations and priorities align with our communities? How do we know?

Feedback cycles are great ways to check for clarity and to promote collaboration. But what does that even mean? Strategies for clear communication:

- Avoid the jargon. It is easy to get lost in the language of education but take a step back and think, would the person that I love who is not in the field of education understand what I am saying right now? Sometimes my own family will joke that I am bit like Chandler Bing from friends: no one really knows what I do for work. When engaging families, it is okay to take off the professional academic hat and to interact with families as the partners, friends, and community that they are!
- Some of the confusion with families can often come from their discomfort or fear of asking "the wrong" question. Modeling accessibility for families can look like asking questions, making mistakes especially if we are attempting to speak a language that is new to us and your families are also learning English. It is important to focus on people first.

Culture Shift: Be Family Centered

- Keep families at the center of your LEAs goals, strategies, practices, and policies. Ask yourself, who does this benefit? Why are we making this change or decision?
- Ask and utilize family input. And then let families know how you have used their input!

It is not enough that we ask families for input, we must then make sure that families know that their time in providing that input was meaningful. A culture that values families makes it clear how this input has been used as a tool for improvement.

“If we can think about research as being helpful tools, whatever the findings are, it could give us some insights on a day-to-day basis as we’re teaching or running a school that helps everyone do what they’re doing even better.”

— Dolores Delgado Bernal



Stories and Anecdotes are Data

Growth and goal achievement is important quantitative data. Extend your knowledge by asking families for stories or anecdotes to add to what the numerical data is showing. This practice can help to better inform strategies by achieving clarity of what the numerical data is showing rather than assuming and possibly missing the mark.

Stories are collected daily through informal interactions. One strategy shared by Lisa Wisham, Senior School Support and Research Associate and School and District Improvement Specialist with the Utah Education Policy Center, is to carry post-its or a small notebook with you. Noting standout comments or stories to revisit later can help with reflection, processing, and even utilizing these stories during resource allocation reviews, assessment data review meetings, event or workshop planning, and even helping to inform what professional learning might be most beneficial for your teaching teams

These informal moments are still part of your feedback cycle practices. A part of a culture shift that centers families involves a mindset shift which views every interaction as an opportunity to learn, grow, and strengthen the relationships between home, school, and community.

Confusion, Frustration, Disengagement, and Conflict

Without the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion or a desire to understand by all parties, people can often be left with assumptions or misunderstandings. Confusion, frustration, disengagement, and even conflict are often symptoms of a lack of clarity.

Clarity comes with vulnerability that for professionals can look like admitting that things can always be better. Clarity comes with continuous improvement which often looks like continuously asking, does that make sense and is this doable?

There is no clarity without communication.

Families Are Responsible Too

Family engagement is a two-way street! Please find some resources that you can share with families to help them engage with you as the school or community program

- [Partnering with Your Child's Teacher](#) (podcast)
- U.S. Department of Education's [Raise the Bar: Resources for Parents and Families](#)
- [CDC's Essentials for Parenting Teens](#) webpage
- Alliance for a Healthier Generation's [4 Ways to Get Kids Involved in the Kitchen](#) (at-home learning strategies)
- [How Dads Can Get More Involved in Education](#)

The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) Want to Know!

As the USBE explores different ways to provide the opportunity for families to share what their experiences in the K-12 public education setting has been, the privacy of all families and students remains at the top of the agencies priorities. The USBE would like to know how families would feel about receiving a survey link via their cell phone as a text message.

We are asking for input from the community to gauge interest or disinterest in receiving text messages for surveys they might currently be receiving in paper form via mail or electronic form via email. Please share the link and/or QR code. The survey will close on November 1, 2024.



Link: <https://bit.ly/USBEtext>

Parent and Caregiver Focus Groups: Participants Needed!



Join focus groups statewide this fall to inform change and a better life for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs in Utah.

Wondering if you are a good fit?

Are you a parent or caregiver of a child with special needs?
If so, you might be perfect to give your opinions and input!

To be considered, please fill out the questionnaire at

bit.ly/T5FocusGroup



Groups will be held throughout Utah in September, October and November of 2024. Space is limited in each group and participation is voluntary.

After filling out the questionnaire you will be contacted about specific location, date and time.

Filling out the questionnaire does not oblige you to participate.

Confirmed participants will receive a meal during the group and a small gift card as a 'thank you' for participating.

Questions?

Contact Amy Wall at amywall@utahparentcenter.org or call 801-272-1051

Sept. 15 - 21, 2024 is Coordinators Appreciation Week!

IEL's Coalition for Community Schools is proud to host the 8th annual Community School Coordinators Appreciation Week (CAW).

Start thinking about how you want to thank your Coordinator now!

ECU Parent Survey Extended Until August 31!

The Early Childhood Utah (ECU) Advisory Committee's Social-Emotional and Mental Health Subcommittee promotes broad statewide coordination and collaboration among various state early childhood programs and services to ensure that Utah children enter school healthy and ready to learn.

Currently, they are gathering data on the prevalence of suspension and expulsion in early childhood programs in the state. The goal is to collect information to better understand the needs of programs and parents and to help them access resources for helping children with challenging behaviors. Your feedback is essential in helping us understand the challenges and impacts of expulsion practices on children and families. Share and complete this survey [here](#).

Disclaimer

LEAs have the duty to select instructional materials that best correlate to the core standards for Utah public schools and graduation requirements. (UCA 53G-4-402(1(a))). Posting of these resources by USBE staff curriculum content specialists does not imply the resources have received official endorsement of the State Board. Educators are responsible to ensure use of these materials "complies with LEA policies and directives."

If you have questions or concerns about this email, please contact the sender of this email. If your question or concern isn't adequately addressed, you can contact the USBE Hotline at (801)538-7813

THIRD-PARTY LINKS:

This document contains links to other third-party websites. Such links are only for the convenience of the reader or user. USBE does not recommend or endorse the contents of the third-party sites nor is all the content of the linked sites reviewed by staff.



Community Coordinators do so much. Share a big high-five, gold star, hug, or simple thank you with your Community School Coordinators this week



#COORDINATORSROCK!
communityschools.org

